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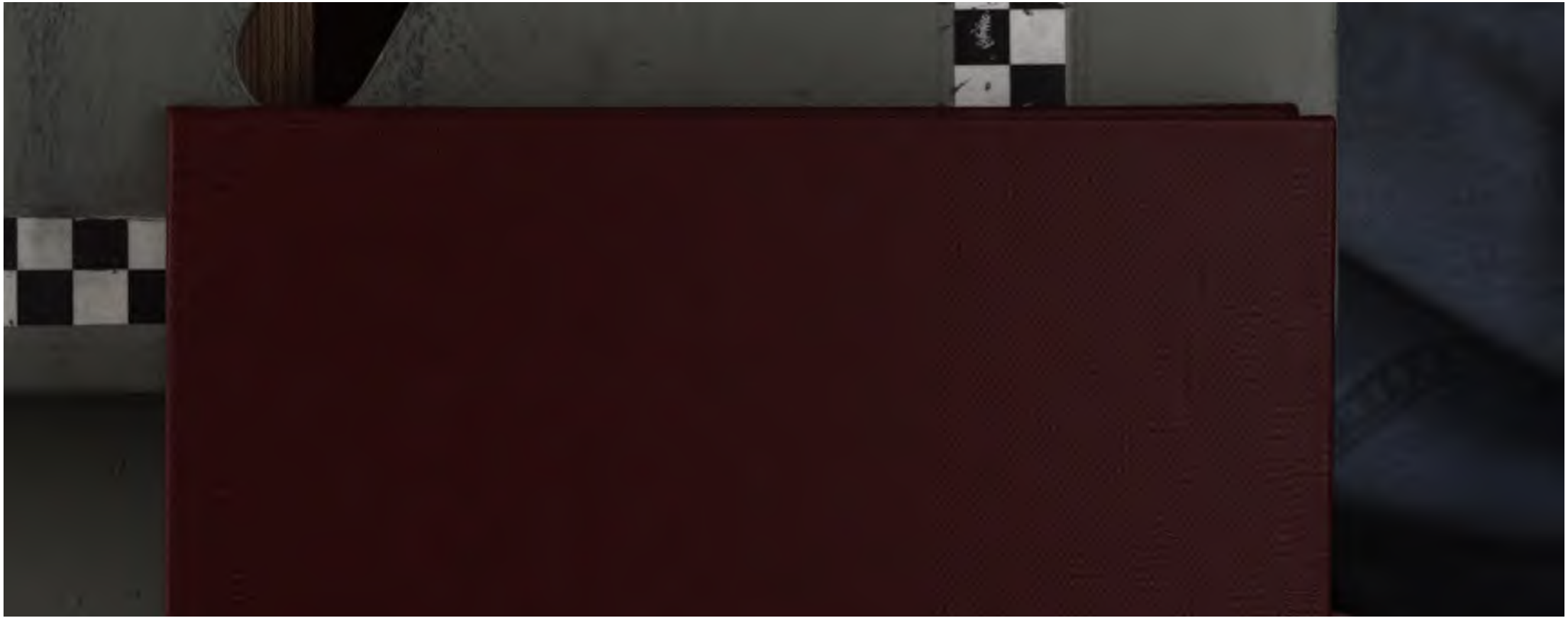
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THE

ASSURANCE OF FAITH,

OR

CALVINISM

IDENTIFIED WITH

UNIVERSALISM.

BY THE REV. DAVID THOM,

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VOL. I.

Fidei dentur quæ fidei sunt.

BACON.

Sapientiam sibi adimunt qui, sine ullo judicio, inventa majorum probant; et ab aliis, pecudum more, ducuntur.

LACTANTIUS.

LONDON:

SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL,

MDCCCXXXIII.

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author a trade. Indeed, at no time is he conscious of having *intentionally* rendered it subservient to the promotion of his secular interests. From an early period of life impressed with a deep conviction of the importance of the subject, and having had it almost always present to his mind, his great, his paramount anxiety was, to find out, if possible, what in regard to it might be the truth. Years, however, rolled on, without bringing to him what he so ardently desired. The study of different systems of religion, and still more of the characters of those by whom these different systems had been broached and supported, instead of satisfying, contributed but the more to puzzle and perplex him. Frequently, before his mind opened to *the truth*, did he fancy that he had attained to the object of his wishes; and yet, as often as, in calm sobriety, he allowed himself to consider the theory which at first sight had captivated him, he discovered about it *a hitch*, a something which could not abide the test of strict examination; and above all, although, by means of it, conscience might for a time have been lulled asleep, he soon found it rising again in all its majesty, asserting its *natural* supremacy, and charging him with guilt in a way, which the particular theory did not enable him fully, finally, and triumphantly to refute. Besides, when he

looked to the characters and conduct of professors of religion in general, he observed in them nothing which he could not account for on principles with which he was already and naturally acquainted. Can it be surprising if, under such circumstances, and with a mind constituted as his is, the author should long have continued the victim of mental torture and disquietude?

Even the first glimpse which he had of *the truth as it is in Jesus*, by no means at once relieved the author from all his embarrassments. Although, by perceiving *the love of God to himself personally*, he was introduced into the church of God, and became a partaker of the apostolic faith, it was long before his mind so far expanded to spiritual things, as to enable him to take an enlarged and comprehensive view of them. He had, as has happened to other Christians before him, to pass through his *noviciate*. In this state of mind he was called upon to take charge of a congregation,—set before them the views which at that time interested and occupied his own thoughts,—broached sentiments which, although true in the main, and of supreme importance, were frequently ill-expressed, and on some occasions mixed up with no inconsiderable proportion of error,—drew down upon himself, from certain respectable individuals, chiefly of the Pharisaical and

Sadducean sorts, a charge of heresy,—and was tried and condemned by judges, the majority of whom, he clearly perceives, were ignorant of the gospel; but some of whom, it is probable were, like himself, in the first stages of Christianity; and, labouring thereby under partial and limited views of the subject, were unable to make the requisite allowances for a mind, supremely attached to God's word, and struggling to emancipate itself from the thraldom of early and long-cherished prejudices?*

* The event alluded to in the text, occurred in September, 1825. Only two members of the Ecclesiastical Court by which the author was condemned, dissented from, and protested against, the sentence pronounced upon him. The persons alluded to were, Mr. Thomas Lockerby, minister of Cadder, and Mr. John Dick, minister of Rutherglen. Of the former gentleman, as still alive, it would be indelicate to speak in terms of commendation. But with regard to the latter, as having several years since "shuffled off this mortal coil," the author may be permitted to indulge in the language of truth and affection. He can say, without the slightest exaggeration, that he never knew a human being, his intercourse with whom, (and his deep regret now is, that with Mr. Dick it had not been greater), has left a more pleasing impression on his mind. If consummate modesty, sterling integrity, unsophisticated good sense, the most amiable dispositions, and boundless Christian philanthropy, and all these set off and enhanced by a total want of priestly intolerance, entitle a man to the respect of his contemporaries and posterity, to that, in no ordinary degree, John Dick was entitled. True, while alive he was but little known; his constitutional shyness of character, and aversion to strife, having stood in the way of his taking an active and distinguished part in the stirring events of his time; nor has he left behind him any of those memorials, by which a literary reputation is established with after ages. But he was himself *a living epistle;* and as such he is embalmed in the recollections of his friends and acquaintances. Excellent man! Methinks I see thee yet, with thy benign aspect, and gentle, retiring, Christian-like demeanour. Primitive simplicity, child-like guilelessness of character, were thine. Thou mightst not have coincided in opinion in all respects with the writer of these pages; but thine

The lessons taught the author, by this event, were extremely valuable. He not merely saw the utter impossibility of *natural men*, whether belonging to the class of Pharisees, or that of Sadducees, sympathizing with a Christian, in his pursuit after and maintenance of truth; and the unscriptural nature of church establishments; but his mind was opened, likewise, to the state and circumstances of the ordinary bodies of dissenters. He could not help observing, that they held the doctrines, and in many respects adhered to the practices, of the church, from the bosom of which he had just been ejected. The suspicion soon crossed his mind, that their situation, in a religious point of view, might, if enquired into, be found still farther to resemble that of the members of the Scottish establishment. An examination of what they were, contributed to strengthen this suspicion; or rather, converted it into certainty. He saw a few Dissenters, although amidst many disadvantages, and in a comparatively feeble and undecided manner, professing, clinging to, and acting under the influence of divine truth; while the great majority

opposition, if opposition thou hadst given to him, would have been fair, and open, and affectionate; the result of personal conviction, and of an ardent desire to promote the interests of thy supposed erring brother. But, peace to thine ashes. Were all who wear thy garb like thee, it would go far to reconcile one to the clerical profession.

of them appeared to be completely ignorant of it; shewing, by the nature of their profession and practice, that they neither *knew what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.* This discovery, soon after his first condemnation,* determined the author to keep aloof from the bodies of Evangelical Dissenters, and to stand upon his own footing. It is due, however, to the bodies in question to state, that had he offered to join them, he would in all probability have been rejected. He was the stricken deer; and driven with ignominy from one herd, it was scarcely to have been looked for, that he should meet with a hearty reception from any other. Besides, his determined support of the doctrine of *the assurance of faith,* exhibited in his open and oft-expressed conviction, that no man *destitute of the certain knowledge of God's love to himself personally* could be a Christian, would have been no recommendation of him to persons, the great majority of whom were systematically *religious sceptics.*† But, as has been already observed, his early discovery of what the bodies commonly called *Calvinistic Dissenters* were, having

* The author was a second time condemned as a heretic in 1828. The sentence will be found among the Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, for that year. The ostensible ground of condemnation was, his work, entitled: "Three questions proposed and answered, concerning the life forfeited by Adam, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal punishment."

† See page 248, of the first volume.

determined him to act an independent part, spared *him* the trouble of asking for admission among them, and *them* the pain of refusing his application.

Set free from the trammels of an establishment, and enabled to keep aloof from other entangling religious alliances, the author began to prosecute his investigations into the sacred volume, with fearlessness and success. Having resolved to profit by every hint which previous enquirers had given, and yet to be fettered in his researches by the views of none, no system of religion of mere human origin now came amiss to him. The result of acting upon such principles was, that, instead of standing still, or rather pacing the same dull round, in his notions of Christianity, as almost all, if not all sects and classes of religionists are doing,* relations of divine truth, previously unknown to and unobserved by him, from time to time presented themselves to his notice; and his own theory, at first crude and undigested, gradually assumed form and consistency. Weak points having been strengthened, errors detected, and incongruities removed, at last the scheme stated and developed in the following pages took possession of his mind.

* In consequence of neglecting the apostolic warning, given, 1 Cor. iii. 3—7.

If any one thing more than another has contributed to the comparative perfection of the author's system, it has been his desire, his strong unquenchable desire, to let no party names or distinctions, and no secular motives, interfere with his researches. Many have professed to love truth, and to follow after her for her own sake, who, nevertheless, by undue concessions, or by throwing a veil over their sentiments, have contrived to bask in the sunshine of establishments, and sometimes even to enjoy their dignities.* But the resolution of the author all along has been, that let the consequences be what they might, truth should by him be sought for, embraced, and proclaimed. From every man, from every sect, therefore, where it was to be found, he has culled it. But to the word of God, especially, his attention has been directed, and by it the sentiments of all religious theorists have been tried. Understanding the grand feature of the Baconian system of philosophy to be, that nature is to be constantly searched and scrutinized; and that new principles are by the inductive process to be derived from her, regardless of the interference of these with inveterate maxims, or rashly concocted theories; the author conceived, that

* The names of Bishop Hoadley, Principal Campbell, of Aberdeen, and others, some of them perhaps living characters, will occur to the literary reader.

he could only make progress in his researches after divine truth, by dealing with the word of God, as Bacon, with a view to advancement in physical science, recommended his disciples to deal with nature. As *a discovery* in nature is, in the school of Bacon, held paramount to *every mere principle,* by whomsoever adopted, and however long established; so *a discovery* in God's word, the author resolved, should to his mind carry greater weight, than *principles* in theology resting on the authority, and established by the *dicta,* of names however celebrated. And this, because what *external nature,* with its store of facts, is to the true philosopher; *the word of God,* with its store of facts, is to the true theologian. The author having acted on these principles, it will be of no consequence to tell him, either that some views which he holds are novel, or that others have been held before him by persons whom *the church* has agreed to stigmatise as heretics. To shew him *from scripture* that they are untrue, will be more to the purpose. No by-name attached to his sentiments,—no personal abuse heaped on himself,—will have the slightest influence upon his mind. A single proof adduced from God's word, shewing that either in whole or in part he is mistaken, will, in his estimation, outweigh volumes of direct charges, or indirect insinuations.

The author, then, puts his work into the hands of his readers, satisfied that, in so far as the topics of which it treats are concerned, it contains a system of religion which, as a whole, is different from and superior to any that has yet been submitted to the public.

The superiority which he claims for his system mainly arises, as has been already stated, from the fact of his not having been deterred by any consideration, from doing justice to the creeds of different classes of religionists, whatever might be the popular odium in which they were held. He has fearlessly and unscrupulously selected from all of them, whenever it has appeared to him, that in their statements they were borne out by the inspired and infallible declarations of the Most High. With the Calvinists he contends, that God, of His sovereign good pleasure, chose in Christ, before the foundation of the world, a certain number of the human race, that *they might be holy, and without blame before him in love:* Eph. i. 4; Rom. viii. 29, 30; xi. 7:—with the Arminians, that Christ died for all; having been *a propitiation, not for the sins of* believers *only, but also for the sins of the whole world:* 1 John ii. 2; Heb. ii. 9:—and with the Universalists, that Christ ultimately saves all; it having been the express purpose of his coming into the world, *that the world*

through him might be saved. John iii. 16, 17; Rom. viii. 20, 21; 1 Tim. ii. 4, 6; James i. 18. And yet, with popular religionists of all descriptions, the author agrees in maintaining, that *the wicked shall be eternally punished.* Mat. xxv. 46; 2 Thess. i. 9; Rev. xxi. 8. With all deserving the Christian name, he strenuously contends for the Supreme Deity of the Lord Jesus. In denying the possibility of God's character being known to mankind, except by positive revelation; in denying that Adam, when he originally transgressed, forfeited spiritual and eternal life; and in some other respects, he will be found to coincide in his views with the Socinians. Perhaps, as a whole, his sentiments are most agreeable to what is denominated, the Supralapsarian Calvinistic theory. Nothing, he is well aware, will more annoy the *natural* mind, or prevent him from having the support of those who are commonly accounted *liberals* in religion, than the decision with which he has set himself in opposition to *the doctrine of free will;*—his insisting on the scriptural distinction between *soul* and *spirit;*—his denying that any, except the elect of God, either *shall* or *can know the truth;*—and, above all, the direct attack which he has made on *scepticism* by maintaining, with the Bereans or followers of Mr. John Barclay, that only those who have *the ab-*

solute certainty of life everlasting belonging to themselves personally, believe the gospel, are partakers of the divine nature here, and shall enter into the kingdom of God hereafter. Rom. viii. 16; 2 Peter i. 1—4; 1 John v. 10, 11; Rev. xxi. 7, 8.

Can a theological Ishmael, like the author, expect either the countenance, or sympathy, of any class of *mere sectarians?*

Satisfied, however, as the author is, that he presents to his readers in these pages a system of religion superior to any which has *yet* occupied their attention, he is far, very far indeed, from arrogating to himself the claim of having reached the *ne plus ultra* of divine discovery. On the contrary his conviction is, that he, and those who agree with him in sentiment, are yet in many respects only standing on the threshold of revelation. He is convinced, that *he and they know nothing yet as they ought to know.* 1 Cor. viii. 2. Taught from above *a little more* than those who have gone before him, the author sees, in the light of *the superior* views imparted to him, many errors into which his predecessors have fallen, and many imperfections with which they are chargeable: but he knows well, likewise, that in an after period of the church, believers will have just as much reason to be surprised at the narrowness and

indistinctness of many of the views discoverable in him, as he has to be at similar features observable in the systems of a preceding age. Unless, indeed, some one of those believers, better acquainted with the ordinary religious standard of the present day than his contemporaries, and consequently able to compare with it the views stated and developed in the following pages, shall perceive, that however limited these views may be in comparison with his own, they are nevertheless an advance, a considerable advance, on the current theology of the period.

"Nature delights in progress," says the Poet of Night, somewhere in his wonderful production; and the remark is no less applicable to Grace. Divine truth, it was never intended, should all at once be apprehended fully by the Christian mind. The sentiments disclosed in creeds and confessions, sermons and controversial writings, were evidently meant to be so many stepping stones, in the progress towards something ulterior. Used for this purpose, no enlightened believer can find fault with them: it is only when employed as means of damming up the waters of divine enquiry,—as impediments in the way of the onward march of the followers of the Lamb,—that human compositions on the subject of religion becoming positively noxious, the

author, and all who with him understand the subject, are obliged to lift up against them, the voice of solemn and indignant reprobation.

As to the author's expectations of drawing public attention to his work, they are exceedingly faint. Totally unknown in the literary circles;—without any influence with reviewers, and, though he had it, indisposed to exert it;—labouring, in the land of his birth, under a grievous imputation of heresy;—holding sentiments with which neither the religious, nor the irreligious, can sympathize;—and, above all, obliged to charge a price for his book which must, for a time at least, keep it out of the hands of the inferior classes of society;—he will not be surprised if, to use a common and expressive phrase, it fall still-born from the press. And as such an event will not surprise, so neither will it annoy him. In spite of the risk he runs of having cast in his teeth, by those who are not acquainted with him, the fable of *the fox and the sour grapes*, he will speak out candidly and say, that these volumes are not intended for general perusal. He has no wish to forget the injunction of his divine master, *not to cast pearls before swine.* The persons, therefore, for whose sakes he writes, and whom by the system explained and advocated in the following pages he hopes to be instru-

mental in benefiting, are not *mankind in general,* but *the members of the church of the living God.* It will present to dear Christian friends in immediate communion with himself, a connected view of doctrines which at different periods they have heard from his lips; and it will, perchance, stimulate some humble disciples of the Lord of Glory, whom he has never *seen,* and whom he may never *see in the flesh,* to an increased and edifying examination of the sacred volume. If, besides, coming into the hands of some who, although at present ignorant of the gospel, are among *the destined heirs of salvation,* it shall in any way contribute towards their reception of *Christ and him crucified,* a purpose will be answered over and above that directly aimed at. Even although the work itself should be speedily forgotten, may not its grand characteristic principles occupy the attention of a few individuals long enough to take possession of their minds?—from them, may they not spread to others?—and thus, silently and imperceptibly, but certainly, may not his work become one means of leading onward to the superior advancement in religion of a future age? How delightful to think, that nothing, no, not even the minutest event, takes place in vain. If upon the fall of an apple, depended Newton's splendid discovery of the theory of gravitation, is it too much to

suppose, that upon the publication of the unnoticed work of an obscure author, *may depend* the most splendid discoveries in divine truth?

As expressive of the views and feelings with which the author sends forth these volumes to the world, he has no hesitation in adopting the language of Robert Sandeman, in the appendix to his celebrated Letters on Hervey's Dialogues. "If amidst the throng of daily publications, my book serve as a little transitory fuel to the fire of that contention which the Saviour came to revive upon the earth, and which will continue burning till he come again, my purpose in writing is sufficiently honoured."

It is the perfect conviction which the author has, of the truth of the main principles upon which the system developed in these pages is based, that renders him careless about the *immediate* result. Truth can afford to wait. However long delayed the period of its triumphs, in due season that period will arrive. Opposition may *seem* to impede, but not all the opposition of earth and hell can *in reality* arrest its progress. Its march in every age has been slow and stately, but it has been sure. Admirably observes the philosophical historian, in reference to this matter, *veritas visu et mora, falsa festinatione et incertis valescunt.** The sys-

* Tacit. Annal. l. 2. c. 39.

tem of the author not being false, he has no occasion to push it; nor to throw dust in the eyes of the public, with a view to promote its immediate success: it is enough for him if, ages after he and his work shall have been forgotten, the system itself, after having been subjected to every conceivable species of opposition, and tested in every conceivable way, shall be found silently making progress, and surmounting every difficulty, in virtue of its own inherent evidences of divine origin.

In thus appealing to "Prince Posterity," the author is perfectly aware of the ridicule which, in the estimation of many, he must incur. To him, however, the charge which "the witty Dean"* attempts to fasten on those who are not content with the judgment of their contemporaries, does not apply. For, be it observed, it is not about *his book*, but about *the system which his book develops*, that the author is any way solicitous. The book itself *may*, and probably soon *will perish*; but the system itself, he rejoices to think, *is immortal*. Besides, the posterity to which he appeals, is not *mankind in general*,—a body whose pretensions to judge in a case of this kind, whether now or afterwards, he utterly rejects and disclaims,—but *the members of the church of Christ*: a body which, although at present exhibit-

* Swift. See the *Epistle Dedicatory* prefixed to his *Tale of a Tub*.

ing much of that dullness and inaptitude to comprehend divine things, which characterized its members during the period of Christ's personal ministry, is nevertheless evidently about to commence a career of progression; and which will, he has no doubt, in some future age, shine forth with a lustre, of which it is now entirely destitute.

The style of the work has of course occupied the author's attention; but it has been with him a matter of subordinate concern. His grand object has been, to express himself throughout plainly and perspicuously. He has not attempted what are commonly called the graces of composition, partly from a consciousness of wanting the qualifications requisite to succeed in the attempt, and partly from a conviction that the subject does not admit of them. He will be found to have indulged to a certain degree in repetition. This he has done advisedly. He knows well that repetition is generally sadly annoying; but he is convinced that, notwithstanding, it is extremely useful: having discovered from experience, that truths heard by him for the second, tenth, twentieth time, have in many cases taken a hold upon his mind, which, if heard by him only once, they never could have done; and being satisfied, that much of the superficial knowledge in every department of

science prevalent at the present day, is traceable to the false ideas, of the possibility of truth being apprehended at a glance, and of the grand secret of the mind's making progress being the constant occupation of it with variety. It is astonishing, that the manner in which the scriptures themselves are composed, nay, that the manner in which all our habits are acquired, should not have corrected such notions. Is not incessant repetition, with a certain degree of variety, characteristic of the former?—is it not by incessant repetition, combined with occasional variety, that we acquire the latter? Taught by these facts, as well as by his own experience, the author has allowed himself to indulge in a good deal of amplification. He is satisfied, that although in works of imagination it may be advisable to render the descriptions as short and sketchy as possible, and to leave the mind of the reader to exert itself in filling up the outline, a very different rule falls to be observed in works on the subject of theology. The statements, definitions, distinctions, and illustrations, can scarcely be too minute or ample. Nothing should be left to the imagination. A single outline which requires to be filled up by the mind of the reader, is one opening too much for the entrance of error and delusion. The author is well aware, that limits must be imposed on

the amplifying tendency. That it is possible to be so minute, as to become tedious and prosy. But let any man who has had much experience in these matters say, if when he has attempted to be exceedingly condensed in his theological statements, he has not frequently been reminded of the *brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio,* of Horace? If, when he has been pluming himself on his trim, and neat, and well-defined manner of expressing himself, he has not sometimes, if an honest man, been stopped by the suspicion, that the nicely-turned sentence might be the means of insinuating a falsehood into his reader's mind? The author trusts, that when his work comes to be examined by persons competent to judge, it will be candidly admitted by them, that, with all his prosing and prolixity, he has in some parts of it, at least, contrived to present clearly, in very narrow compass, topics upon which volumes, not inconsiderable in number and dimensions, have been written.

Upon the arrangement of his materials, a good deal of pains has been bestowed by the author. As intelligibility has been his object; and as, without a lucid perspicuous mode of statement, this was obviously unattainable; the order of succession, in which his views should be brought out, has occasioned him no small degree of anxiety. He hopes that he has succeeded.

The work in its present state, does not exhibit the first, nor the second attempt made by him to reduce it to bodily form. He flatters himself, that the order in which the different subjects treated of by him are placed before the reader, could not have been improved. This, however, as a matter in some measure appertaining to the province of criticism, he leaves to be decided by those, who are greater proficients in that science, than he himself can pretend to be.

With a view to perspicuity, the author has been induced, in opposition to the wishes of his printer, to overload, perhaps even deform, his pages with italics.

For the acquisition of the views developed in this work, the author desires to acknowledge himself indebted, as much to numerous, pleasing, and instructive conversations with the members of his flock, as to the express study of books written on the subject of theology. The latter may have furnished him originally in many cases with materials: but to the former he owes his having had these materials frequently brought before his mind;—his having been obliged to consider them under a great variety of aspects, and in answer to a great variety of objections;—and his having had relations of divine truth thereby suggested to him which, otherwise, he might have overlooked. In a case where

he is so largely indebted to all, it may seem unnecessary for him to specify the obligations under which he lies to some. And yet there is one Christian friend, from his conversations with whom, he has derived such distinct* views of divine law, as *by its very nature merely restraining*, and as *never intended to confer positive rewards on men*,—views which will be found stated in the third chapter of this work,—that he should deem himself obnoxious to a charge of culpable omission, were he not to acknowledge the favour. He alludes to Mr. Robert G. Hunt; whose tract on *the evidences of faith, and the impregnable security of believers in Christ*, the reader will find elsewhere spoken of. He is aware, that the mind of his excellent friend has been much enlarged in its views of divine truth, since that tract was written: but when he takes into account the early period of that gentleman's Christian career at which it was composed, there is afforded to him a very extraordinary proof of the rapidity, with which it pleases *the Father of Spirits*, sometimes to carry forward the work of illumination in the hearts of his people.

Although the obligations under which the author lies to the writings of the late Mr. Barclay, of Edinburgh,

* He says *distinct*; for the subject undoubtedly was known to him in a general way previous to his conversations with Mr. Hunt: but it never was opened up to him, nor impressed upon his mind, as it was in his intercourse with that gentleman.

and his followers, are more than once acknowledged in the body of the work, he would, notwithstanding, take this opportunity of especially directing the attention of *Christians*, to the few publications which have issued from the pens of the members of the Berean school. In addition to Mr. Barclay's "Dissertation on the Book of Psalms," "Without faith, without God," and "Assurance of faith vindicated," to which allusion is made in the following pages; the author would mention, Mr. William Brooksbank's "Doctrines of the gospel stated and vindicated," "Appeal to the scriptures on the assurance of faith," and "Remarks upon several texts of scripture;" Mr. John Nichol's "One faith of the gospel distinguished from the pretended act of appropriation," and "Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism explained;" and Mr. Sang's "Discourse on John iii. 3," "Observations on certain passages in the writings of Mr. Walker of Dublin," &c. Had it not been for the exceedingly limited pecuniary circumstances of the author, all these works should long since have been republished by him. As it is, those who can procure them, he would strongly recommend to do so: for, making some few allowances, he has no hesitation in saying, that they appear to him to contain almost the only pure and scriptural theology of modern times.

"I should not think the better of a man who should tell me on his death-bed he was sure of salvation. A man cannot be sure himself that he has divine intimation of acceptance; much less can he make others sure that he has it. No rational man can die without uneasy apprehension."—"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God."—The former is the language of Dr. Samuel Johnson;* the latter of an inspired apostle.† The former is the dictate of *the natural;* the latter the experience of *the supernatural mind.* Every spiritually enlightened individual will find in this distinction, a key to the understanding of the author's peculiar sentiments, and of the principles upon which the present work is constructed.

It will be found that the author has entered largely into the question, as to what constitutes *the particular ground on which, in believing the divine testimony, the mind rests;* and as to what is *the particular means by which the certainty of life everlasting is introduced into the conscience.* He has done so, not as if by any statements and reasonings of his there could be accomplished, what God has reserved to Himself as His distinguish-

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. 3d.

† Rom. viii. 16.

ing prerogative; but by way of leading *the natural mind* as near as can be to *the truth as it is in Jesus;* and by way of furnishing fellow-believers, who may have reflected less upon the subject than he himself has, with the means of meeting the cavils, and answering the objections, of ungodly men. The author knows well, and all who with him believe the gospel know well likewise, that *faith* is itself *the evidence to us of the truth of the divine testimony,* Heb. xi. 1; 1 John v. 10, 11; and that, *so far from any one's naturally understanding that testimony implying his belief in it,* it is only *by our believing in it that we truly and spiritually understand it.* 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is not *by understanding we believe,* but it is *by believing we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Heb. xi. 3. Merely verbal as, to *the natural mind,* this distinction must ever appear to be, it is nevertheless, as all believers know, a most important one. And yet, the moment it is once fully apprehended, that *faith* or *belief* is the turning point at which the views of the mind change from *natural* to *spiritual,* how clear is it, that *the belief,* and *the knowledge* or *understanding* of divine things, are necessarily synonymous terms. Thenceforward, we find no difficulty in conceiving why it is, that *belief* and *knowledge* are used interchange-

ably throughout the sacred volume. Isaiah liii. 11; Mat. xiii. 23; John xvii. 3; 1 John v. 19, 20.

Perhaps the meaning of the last paragraph, and of the following work itself, will be more readily apprehended, if the author observe, that the essential distinction between *the natural* and *the spiritual mind* is, that *the former* is mind *accommodated to* and *overcome by* material objects and present circumstances; whereas *the latter* is mind *overcoming* material objects and present circumstances, and *accommodating* them to itself. In other words, *the natural mind* is *passive*, being *subjected to present circumstances;* whereas *the spiritual mind* is *active*, as *triumphing over present circumstances.* 1 John v. 4, 5; see also, Heb. xi, throughout, and Rom. viii. 3, 4. When a man, then, understands divine truth *naturally*, his mind brings down divine truth to the level of its own *natural notions of things;* that is, not understanding divine truth *as such*, it does not understand it *at all:* but when divine truth is understood *spiritually*, being understood *as divine truth* or *as what it is*, it elevates the mind to the level of itself; or, rather, it becomes itself in the mind *a new, divine, and spiritual understanding.* A *natural understanding* of divine truth, is *no understanding* of it at all; nothing deserving to be regarded as *the understanding* of divine truth,

but *the understanding of it as divine truth*, that is, *faith in it as of divine origin*. 1 Thess. ii. 13; see also, Mat. xiii. 23, compared with 19—22.

The man who, taught from above, is able to comprehend the view just presented, will at once perceive why it is, that the author insists so much on divine truth not *receiving its evidence from without*, but *containing its evidence in itself*; and *carrying that evidence home to the conscience of every one, by whom it is in reality understood*.

But, quitting every thing that has even the remotest appearance of metaphysics, the author would observe, that as *the cross of Christ* is the constant subject of *his own glorying before God*, so is he desirous to keep it before the minds of his readers, as the only fitting subject of theirs. And as all *who glory in that cross* are Christians indeed, by whatever names they may be known among men, and however lightly they may be esteemed by the world, so with all such he desires to claim spiritual kindred, and to engage in spiritual communion. But he puts away from him with disgust, the idea of having any religious fellowship with those, who virtually *deny the cross of Christ* by alleging, that, although believed in by them, it has left them labouring under doubts and fears respecting *their own personal*

purgation from all sin. The fearful, and the unbelieving, are enumerated along with the other characters, who *have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;* Rev. xxi. 8; and as the author, being neither *fearful* nor *unbelieving* in regard to *the perfection of Christ's work,* and *the consequent gift to himself personally of life everlasting,* 1 John v. 11, has no communion of feeling or fate with such persons, he leaves them to seek for and derive sympathy from *the naturally religious* portion of that world, to which, whatever may be their pretensions to piety, they prove themselves by their scepticism never yet to have ceased to belong.*

Let not the sentiments avowed in these volumes, be the means of compromising any man or body of men. Such as these sentiments are, they are the author's own. He alone is responsible for them. He protests, especially, against the highly respectable body of Scotch Universalists being involved in any condemnation which he himself may incur. Contending so strenuously as he does for the doctrine of election;—nay, glorying in the fact, that but a small number of the human race, comparatively speaking, either *have known* or *shall know the joyful sound;* Matt. xi. 25—27;—he is aware,

* The character of such persons is thus admirably described by the apostle: *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.* 2 Tim. iii. 7.

that he must be regarded by many who profess Universalism as holding sentiments, dreadfully inconsistent with the nature, and calculated to impede the progress, of the cause. But he cannot help his views with regard to this matter. The same scriptures which, shewing him that *the reign of sin* is destined to be swallowed up in and superseded by *the reign of grace*, satisfy him that the unregenerate part of the human race shall ultimately be created anew through the Son of God; satisfy him, likewise, that very few human beings are *fore-known, predestinated, called, justified,* and *glorified.* Rom. viii. 29, 30; Matt. vii, 13, 14; Peter iii. 20. Indeed, *the election of God's people* which, although always regarded by the author as a true, was nevertheless once to him a gloomy and repulsive doctrine, is now felt by him to be peculiarly sweet and refreshing: the circumstance of a few human beings *not perishing, but having everlasting life,* being seen by him to be the grand, the indispensable medium, through which the love of his Heavenly Father ultimately *reaches to and embraces all.* John iii. 16. 17; James i. 18.

Many Universalists, he is likewise aware, will object to his representation of *the personal certainty of everlasting life* being the characteristic feature of genuine Christianity. This he cannot help. Opposition from

every quarter, to what he glories in as his leading doctrine, he is prepared for. Happening in regard to this point to have on his side the experience of the Lord of Glory, of his inspired apostles, and of believers in every age, the author may regret the inability of Universalist friends to agree with him, but this regret is unaccompanied with any doubt as to the scriptural accuracy of his position.

The Universalism of the author will be found to differ from every other system hitherto propounded, in these respects: that it does not require him, with Tillotson, to suppose God untrue; with Winchester, that the punishment of the wicked is limited; or, with Ballou and Balfour, that the distinctive privileges of believers are confined to this present life: on the contrary, according to the system maintained by him, every divine threatening denounced against man is executed to the uttermost; the wicked are punished, not for a time, but everlastingly; and believers, having imparted to them upon earth the life-giving spirit of Christ Jesus, so far from dying as to their minds, are privileged at the moment of their departure from this world to enter into Paradise, and in due time to sit down with their head upon his throne. If consistency with the declarations of scripture be the proper test of any system of theology being

true, what system can be produced better able to abide this test than that of the author?

The Appendix to the work will be found to contain some articles which, either from their inconvenient length, or on other accounts, could not well have been introduced into the text, or presented to the reader in the form of notes. For all of them, he trusts to receiving the thanks of every scripturally-enquiring mind. If there shall appear in any of them, or in the body of the work itself, remarks which savour of harshness, the reader will have the goodness to set these down, partly, perhaps, to the temper of the author, but partly, likewise, to the necessity of calling things by their right names.

May the following work be perused by all, with the scriptures in their hands, or by their sides. May all agreement with the author's views, be on the ground of their ascertained conformity to "the lively oracles;" and may all opposition to them have for its basis, the impossibility of reconciling them with statements emanating from God himself. A fault pointed out in *the spirit of meekness* will at once be corrected, and the author's theory, so far from being thereby deteriorated, will be the better for the alteration;—a rebuke tendered in *the same spirit*, will be received as *a precious*

oil which breaketh not the head. But mere cavilling and personality, as has been already hinted, will obtain no notice whatever.

It remains to observe that, as some may be desirous to know the appellation which the author assumes, or the name by which he intends his system to be called, he begs leave to intimate his willingness to have himself and his system designated by any term, which it may please the ingenuity of friends, or the malice of enemies, to apply to them. At the same time, a person wishful to denote briefly, by a reference to existing sects, what the author is, will not be far wrong if he speak of him as A BEREAN-UNIVERSALIST.

THE

ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Quinimo, si fiditis exploratum vos dicere quicquam de Diis vestris, erroris convincite Ciceronem, temeraria et impia dictitare refellitote, redarguite, comprobate: nam intercipere scripta, et publicatam velle submergere lectionem, non est Deos defendere, SED VERITATIS TESTIMONIUM TIMERE.

ARNOBIUS adversus Gentes.

THE phrase *Assurance of Faith*, although constantly occurring in theological writings, and frequently heard from the lips of those who have occasion to speak concerning the subject of religion, is, I am convinced, understood by few. It will be necessary therefore to explain it.

What can be conceived more interesting to a man, when first awakened to the conviction that this present state of existence is subservient and preliminary to another, than to ascertain, if possible, his own future

and ultimate destiny? Callous, indeed, would he be if, considering the deep personal stake which he has in the matter, he could contemplate unmoved the prospect before him. His days are numbered—a period very short and extremely uncertain is to terminate his connection with this present world—to the transitory life which he now possesses an eternal and unchangeable state of being is to succeed—and can reflections such as these occupy his mind, without exciting the desire—the uncontrollable desire—to obtain a solution of all his doubts and difficulties with respect to futurity? Are there any means or expedients, revealed in the scriptures or discoverable otherwise, by which the gloom which overhangs the grave may be dispelled, and a sure and well-grounded hope of everlasting felicity may be attained to?

To the question thus proposed I know only two really distinct answers which can be returned by those who profess to allow the truth of a future state of existence. The one that, in the event of our persevering in the faith, profession, and practice of the gospel till the end of our earthly career, or of our performing certain other conditions prescribed to us, we may expect to be admitted ultimately into the regions of everlasting blessedness. The other that, independently of any conditions whatever which it is incumbent on us to perform, happiness hereafter is certainly and infallibly secured to us. These two answers, it will be observed, differ from each other *toto cælo*. The former holds out to us a shadow of hope, but it leaves us in the main where it found

us, a prey to doubt, uneasiness, and perplexity. The latter, if received as true, quashes every doubt, removes every difficulty, and fills us necessarily with *joy and peace in believing.*

It is to the conviction produced by the latter of these —as the answer which we believe God in his word returns to the question proposed—that we apply the phrase *assurance of faith.* Any remnant of *conditionality,* and thereby of *uncertainty* in the mind respecting God's love to ourselves personally and our own personal enjoyment of everlasting life, appears to us to be inconsistent with and destructive of the privilege which the phrase denotes. That *the personal certainty of everlasting life* is not the sense in which the words *assurance of faith* have *always* been employed by theologians, is freely admitted; but it is the sense in which they are most commonly used at the present day, and that in which we intend to use them throughout this treatise.

Before proceeding farther, it is, perhaps, due to myself to mention, that, like some of my opponents, although upon grounds different from theirs, I also have my doubts respecting the propriety of applying the phrase *assurance of faith* as is commonly done; or rather respecting the propriety of using the phrase at all. Two of the causes in which these doubts have originated are the following.

First. The tautology implied in the expression. *Faith* by its nature is *assurance.* Or, if this may be questioned in regard to *our belief in the testimony of*

man, at all events it will be found to hold true in regard to *our belief in the testimony of God.* What is my *having faith in* or *believing* what God has declared, but my *being assured* or *absolutely certain that his testimony is true?* *Faith in a divine testimony* and *assurance* are thus *convertible terms,* or *are capable of being used the one for the other;* but if so, why combine and employ them as is done when we adopt the phraseology *assurance of faith?* What real addition to our meaning is the result of joining them in this way? Is it not just equivalent to saying *the assurance of assurance,* or *the faith of faith?* Is it not stating the thing in two distinct terms, where one word would have been amply sufficient for the purpose? But can tautology like this have obtained the sanction of the word of God?

Secondly. The doubt thus created, has received confirmation from the following circumstance. Luke i. 1. stands thus in the ordinary version. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things* WHICH ARE MOST SURELY BELIEVED *among us.* Dr. Campbell of Aberdeen, after having in the text of his translation rendered the Greek τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν, by the English words WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED AMONGST US, assigns his reason for the alteration in a long, interesting, and extremely valuable critical note. According to the Dr., and also according to Parkhurst who in this coincides with him,* "the verb πληροφορεω admits, in scripture, two interpretations. One is, *to perform, fulfil,* or *accom-*

* Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon, under the word πληροφορεω.

plish ; the other, *to convince, persuade,* or *embolden ;* that is, to inspire with that confidence which is commonly consequent upon conviction."† It is true that Dr. Campbell confines this double sense of the word to the verb itself, for he says, although without producing even the shadow of an authority for the assertion, that "the noun πληροφορια denotes *conviction, assurance, confidence.*"‡ But after perusing carefully the Dr.'s exceedingly happy list of proofs that *the verb* signifies *to perform, fulfil,* or *accomplish,* I confess I have not been able to resist the conviction, that there are cases in which *performance, fulfilment,* or *accomplishment,* may be fairly enough set down as the signification which *the noun* likewise has in scripture. For instance, in Hebrews vi. 11, *and we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to* THE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE *unto the end,* are not the last words susceptible of being much more fitly and intelligibly translated, *to* or until THE FULFILMENT OF HOPE or of your hope *to* or until *the end ;* προς την πληροφοριαν της ἐλπίδος ἄχρι τέλους. Again, in Heb. x. 22, we find these words, *Let us draw near with a true heart in* FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH. But when we consider, that throughout the whole of the preceding part of the epistle, and especially in the preceding part of the context, the Apostle is suggesting to New Testament believers that by them were possessed *the realities* of which the Mosaic insti-

† Campbell's *Gospels translated from the Greek,* &c., vol. 4. *Notes Critical and Explanatory.* Note on Luke i. 1.

‡ Ibid.

tutions afforded merely *the shadows*, and that to them *were fulfilled* what had been merely *objects of faith* to the Old Testament Saints, may not the translation which follows be regarded as a much more correct representation of the Apostle's meaning? *Let us draw near with a true heart*, or *a true understanding*, μετ' αληθινης καρδιας, that is, with a right conception of subjects concerning which Jewish believers, previous to the Messiah's advent, could form only faint and incorrect notions,—see 1 Peter i. 10—12; *and in* THE FULFILMENT OF FAITH, εν πληροφοριᾳ πιστεως, that is, *having had fulfilled to us* what were merely *objects of faith* to the Saints who have preceded us,—see Hebrews xi. 39, 40. Observe, I am not asserting dogmatically that *performance, fulfilment*, or *accomplishment*, is *actually* the sense of the verbal noun πληροφορια in the passages quoted, and in one or two others which might be alluded to, for I do not pretend to set up my judgment, in a matter of this kind, in opposition to that of illustrious critics and commentators; but I am merely mentioning what, from the statements of some of these very critics and commentators themselves I have been led to suspect, and at the present moment cannot help suspecting, may after all turn out to be the meaning of the word.*

But I am content to waive every objection to the use of the phrase *assurance of faith* derived from the above and similar sources. Throughout these pages it is employed to signify, as has already been stated, that *ab-*

* See Appendix A.

solute and infallible certainty of our own personal possession of everlasting life which, it is one of my principal objects to shew, *necessarily results from* or rather *is implied in our believing the divine testimony.*

Discussions respecting *the assurance of faith* are not of recent origin. From the earliest ages of Christianity, the subject, as from its importance might have been anticipated, has more or less engaged the attention of those who have been considered the heads of the church. Augustin's sentiments on this point, summed up in that remarkable declaration of his, *fidem suam quisque qui eam habet, videt in corde suo, et tenet certissima scientia et clamante conscientia,** as well as the reasonings of Catarinus, Marinarus, and some other avowed Roman Catholics, are proof positive, that all those whose writings the Church of Rome professes to respect, and whom she claims as belonging to her communion, have not lent their countenance to that "doubtsome faith" upon which the superstructure of Popery seems most appropriately to be built. But *the Mother of Harlots* has not been so neglectful of her supposed interests as to encourage the sentiments of Augustin and his followers. The Canons of the Council of Trent in which it is positively denied, *that any person can know with an assurance of faith which may not after all turn out to have been unfounded that he himself personally is a partaker of the grace of God,* and in which *all who maintain the necessity of the assurance of faith being possessed by a*

* De Trinitate, l. 13, c. 1.

*justified person are anathematised,**—the favour shewn to the Jesuits who have always been the most strenuous supporters of the doctrine, *that a conditional and conjectural hope of eternal life is the highest to which while in this world the mind of man can attain*†—and the assertion of Cardinal Bellarmin, *that no one can by any possibility become absolutely certain as to his own personal justification*,‡—in which he has been followed by the most approved writers of the Popish Hierarchy—put the sentiments of the Church of Rome as a body, in reference to this subject, beyond the reach of misapprehension or mistake; and render the expression "Pontificiorum dubitatio,"§ happily characteristic of the leading article of her creed.

The foundations of Protestantism were laid avowedly in a broad and unqualified contradiction to the Roman Catholic doctrine respecting *assurance*. *The conjectural*

* Sicut nemo pius de Dei misericordia, de Christi merito, deque sacramentorum virtute et efficacia dubitare debet; sic quilibet, dum seipsum, suamque propriam infirmitatem et indispositionem respicit, de sua gratia formidare et timere potest; cum nullus scire valeat certitudine fidei, cui non potest subesse falsum, se gratiam Dei esse consecutum. Sess. 6, cap. 9, ***contra inanem hereticorum fiduciam.***—Si quis dixerit, omni homini ad remissionem peccatorum assequendam necessarium esse, ut credat certo, et absque ulla hesitatione propriæ infirmitatis et indispositionis, peccata sibi esse remissa, anathema sit. Si quis dixerit, hominem a peccatis absolvi, ac justificari, ex eo quod se absolvi ac justificari certo credat; aut neminem esse vere justificatum, nisi qui credat se esse justificatum; et hac sola fide absolutionem et justificationem perfici; anathema sit. Ead. Sess. Canon. 13 et 14 ***de justificatione.***—Canon. et decret. S. S. Œcum. et general. concilii Tridentini.

† See the works of the Jesuits ***passim.***

‡ Bellar. lib. 3. ***de justificatione,*** c. 6.

§ Act. Synod. National. Dordrecht. Reject. error. circa Doct. de Persev. Sanct. Er. 5, p. 274.

and conditional hope of salvation inculcated by the Church of Rome, was combatted with many a scriptural argument—the fact of the interests of that church being involved in the maintenance of a doctrine by which her ignorant and deluded followers were kept dependent on her Priesthood, was to every candid and reflecting mind thoroughly exposed*—and the essential difference between the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Churches was, at first, made to appear to be, that according to the former, justified persons *might doubt*, while, according to the latter, *they could not doubt* with regard to *their own personal salvation.*† But alas, as shall afterwards be shewn, a very few years sufficed to prove, that the real state of the question at issue between them and their opponents had never been understood by the great majority of nominally Protestant writers. Protestants were soon found occupying the same ground from which their predecessors gloried in having driven the adherents of the Church of Rome. The very same weapons by which Roman Catholics had attempted to defend

* Non de nihilo autem est, quod tam acriter Pontificii pro retinenda sua ἐποχῇ et dubitatione certant. Intelligunt scilicet totam negotiationem nundinationis Pontificiæ hoc fundamento niti, et *stabilita semel salutis fiducia* concidere statim regni Pontificii vectigalia, vota, peregrinationes, fraternitates, opera supererogatoria, purgatorium, indulgentiarum mercem, nundinationes missarum, et ceteras ejusdem αἰσχροκερδείας mensas nummularias. *Nam qui certus esset de salute sua, neque ad patrocinia Sanctorum, neque ad merita Martyrum, neque ad Sacerdotis absolutionem confugeret*, quae est Romanæ Tyrannidis carnificina. F. Turretin. Institut. Theolog. Elenct. L. 15, Q. 17, Sect. 4.

† How delightfully does Luther express himself in regard to this point in many of his works, and especially in his well-known commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians.

themselves against the Fathers of the Reformation, were soon turned by persons calling themselves Protestants against the principles of the Reformation itself. The value, importance, and divine nature of the doctrine of *the assurance of faith* began to appear in the light of the fact, that it was as unintelligible, and as much an object of dislike to *the natural minds* of Protestants, as it had been to *those* of Roman Catholics. 1 Corinth. ii. 14. The Arminians, adopting without any scruple, and with scarcely any disguise, the notions of the Papists respecting the subject, *denied the possibility of any person attaining to the infallible certainty of his own personal salvation.** And the better classes of Protestants, as shall afterwards be shewn, although *avowedly* opposed to both Papists and Arminians in reference to this matter, were found covertly rendering the most effective assistance to those open adversaries of the truth, by representing *the personal and infallible certainty of eternal life* not to be *the belief of the gospel itself,* but merely *a possible adjunct and appendage of it*—merely a

* See the works of Arminius, Episcopius, and the other writers of the Remonstrant School. The charge in the text I consider myself entitled to bring against the Remonstrants, notwithstanding their own disclaimer of the identity of their views with those of the Papists, in the statement submitted by them to the Synod of Dordt. For, although Episcopius and his brethren admit *the possibility of a believer's being certain of his present belief,* (more, by the way, than many *soi-disant* Calvinists now do), they are at considerable pains to shew that this by no means implies their admission of *the possibility of any man's being absolutely and infallibly certain of his own final salvation.* See the 7th and 8th *theses* of their statement, under the head of *the perseverance of the Saints.* Act. Synod. Dordrecht. p. 118. Such being the views of the Arminians with respect to assurance, how obvious that, although by a somewhat different route, they travel with the Church of Rome to the same conclusion.

privilege which a believer of the gospel *might* or *might not possess.**

Without wishing to anticipate at the present stage of this essay, what is afterwards to be proved from the writings of authors commonly regarded as belonging to the Calvinistic School of Theology, I may mention, that there is scarcely a statement or argument which was originally employed by the Church of Rome to assail the grand Protestant doctrine of *the assurance of faith*, which has not in modern times, I should rather say in our own day, been employed by writers calling themselves Protestant, to undermine the same glorious doctrine. I speak not of persons who are avowedly Arminian in their sentiments, but of those who would fain be reckoned among the disciples of Calvin. For instance, the distinction between *the assurance of faith*, as respecting the divine record itself merely, and *the assurance of hope*, as respecting our own personal interest in the promises contained in that record, which, having been revived and insisted on by Sandeman,† has obtained the sanction and patronage of many of our so styled Calvinistic writers,‡ was employed by Cardinal Bellarmin, two centuries since, as one of the most effective weapons by which he could assail the doctrines of the Reformation, and thereby of course the Reformation

* This will be shewn afterwards.

† See his Letters on *the Dialogues of Theron and Aspasio.*

‡ Mr. Scott of Aston Sandford, in his Commentary, note on Hebrews vi. 11. Dr. Barr, in his Sermon entitled *the peace of believing distinguished from Antinomian assurance, &c. &c.*

itself.* That is, the professed disciples of Calvin gladly avail themselves of a weapon furnished them by one of the ablest and bitterest of Calvin's adversaries, and this for the purpose of overturning a doctrine which their great master *professedly* taught. Strange circumstance! and yet not more strange than true. To what awful lengths will not ignorance of the gospel and hostility to its most important truths carry *the natural mind?*

There remained one mode of assailing the doctrine of *the assurance of faith*, which it was reserved for Protestant and Calvinistic writers to adopt. This was *to represent the mind as capable of being deceived by its own consciousness!* So decidedly sceptical is this argument—so thoroughly does it tend to subvert the very foundations of all our knowledge and belief—that even the champions of popery shrunk back from the idea of having recourse to it. Not so squeamish, however, have been some of those who glory in the name of protestant. Anxious to sieze upon every means of annoying an antagonist, no matter what might be the cost or risk—eager to grasp at every argument which held out even the faintest prospect of overturning a much hated doctrine, no matter whether legitimate or not—the writers in question have not hesitated to assert, that *our consciousness of believing a truth is no guarantee against the possibility of this our consciousness deceiving us!* That the more talented and respectable part of those Calvinistic writers who oppose the doctrine of *the assurance of faith* are ashamed of this argument, and

* See oppr. Bellarmin. lib. iii. *de justificatione* c. ii.

therefore have not *directly* countenanced it, is freely acknowledged. But that some who rank among the Calvinistic party have had recourse to it, will immediately be proved; and looking to the approval by persons who are held in considerable repute as Calvinistic divines of one publication, at least, in which it is broadly asserted, I cannot help suspecting, that many more are *secretly* pleased both with it, and with the employment of it, than would *openly* choose to avow that they are so.

The present work has for its object to vindicate the grand scriptural and protestant doctrine of *the assurance of faith* against all classes and descriptions of opponents. But it will be found more particularly to have a reference to the sentiments of those who, under pretence of favouring and supporting the doctrine, are at bottom its bitterest and deadliest foes. I intend shewing that *the absolute and infallible certainty of God's love to ourselves personally, and of our own personal enjoyment of everlasting life,* is not merely a privilege which, as believers of the gospel and justified persons, *we may enjoy,* but that it is a privilege which, as believers of the gospel and justified persons, *we all of us actually do enjoy.* As necessarily implied in this, it will be shewn that *every one who labours under doubts and fears concerning God's love to himself personally, does not believe the gospel and is not justified.* One subject intimately connected with the doctrine of *the assurance of faith* will likewise be treated of. I mean *the fate of the family of man considered as a whole.* Concerning

scarcely any other topic do the minds of such even as are Christians appear to be less informed than this, and therefore concerning scarcely any other topic do they appear more decidedly to stand in need of scriptural instruction. The fact is, that in regard to this topic the minds of Protestants *now*, are not one whit more advanced than the minds of their forefathers were *at the period of the reformation*. Besides, although, as shall afterwards be shewn, a man may believe the gospel, and thereby have the certain knowledge of what he himself personally and his fellow believers afterwards shall be, while his views concerning the ultimate fate of mankind in general may be exceedingly vague, obscure, and unsatisfactory; yet, as shall be shewn likewise, it is only by understanding upon scriptural principles what shall be the fate of all, that his privileges as a believer, and the value of *the assurance of faith* as a means to an end, can by him be thoroughly appreciated. A man may be a Christian who knows not distinctly what shall be the ultimate destiny of all—but no man can possess enlarged and enlightened views of Christianity—no man can understand the scriptures as a whole—by whom the paradox of the human race being *everlastingly punished*, and yet being through Christ Jesus *raised to the enjoyment of everlasting life*, is not comprehended.

In asserting the doctrine of *the assurance of faith* it is melancholy to think that I shall have to encounter the opposition, not merely of *the irreligious*, but also of *the religious portion of the community*. That the former

should oppose me is not to be wondered at. The sceptic who avowedly pays no regard to the authority of revelation, and considers the whole of the prophetical and apostolical writings to be one mass of *cunningly devised fables*, having nothing to substitute for the sacred volume, consistently enough with his own principles, scoffs at the idea of *its being in the power of any man to discover, without the possibility of being mistaken, what shall be his own state and circumstances hereafter.* But that those who profess to receive the scriptures *as a divinely inspired record*, should make common cause, and join in an unholy alliance with avowed infidels in this matter, this—this indeed is distressing. Is it possible that religious characters, especially "the serious" and "the evangelical," can be so blind and infatuated as not to be aware of what they are doing? When they make it their constant practice to speak of their own personal destiny hereafter *as being to themselves a matter of uncertainty*, and to run down as chargeable with arrant presumption those who profess to have received from the scriptures *complete satisfaction as to their own personal and everlasting happiness*, does it never occur to them that they are using the language, sanctioning the principles, and playing the game into the hands of the open and inveterate enemies of Christianity? A moment's reflection, surely, is all that is required to convince even the dullest among them of the truth of this. Is it not avowed, nay, gloried in by the sceptic, that notwithstanding all his investigations into the Book of Nature, he finds himself in a state of

doubt and *uncertainty* with respect to *his own future destiny?* And if, according to almost all those who pay the bible the compliment of representing it to be the Book of God, it has not been able to raise *them* above a state of *doubt* and *uncertainty* with respect to *their own future destiny* likewise, wherein, pray, even by their own shewing, consists the superiority of *the Bible* over *the book of nature?* If in abandoning *open and undisguised scepticism,* for what is commonly called *a profession of Christianity,* I am to be left as much in the dark as ever respecting my own fate hereafter, what real reason can be assigned to me why I should not continue honestly *to avow myself a sceptic?* If *the sceptic* and *the Christian* are both *doubtful* and *uncertain* with respect to futurity, what real difference is there between *scepticism* and *Christianity,* and what real reason is there for my preferring the one to the other? Alas, alas, little are our religionists aware of the slur which they bring upon the Christian cause by representing the gospel of Jesus as leaving the mind in regard to futurity exactly where it finds it. Is there no way of rousing such characters from their lethargy? Is there no way of convincing them of the folly—the egregious folly of their procedure? One moment professing that there is nothing they have so much at heart as to be able to *know for certain* what they shall be when emancipated from these bodies of *flesh and blood* —and yet the next, sitting down contented with that *bare possibility* of future happiness, which they share in common with the veriest sceptic! And this they call

Christianity! To shew that, while human statements and reasonings on the subject of religion leave the mind *always* doubtful, and *generally* uneasy in the prospect of eternity, it is the grand, the necessary, the distinguishing prerogative of the word of God, whenever believed in, to cast out of the mind all fears respecting our future state, and, by imparting to us the absolute and infallible certainty of everlasting happiness, to inspire us *with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory*, has been my chief object in undertaking and persevering in this present essay. Happy shall I be, if, as the consequence of perusing it, any, nay even a single one out of the number of my readers shall find himself set free from the distressing thraldom of doubts and fears. The priestly tribe, I am well aware, will not thank me for my labours; and, indeed, when I consider that the doctrine of *man's being necessarily more or less uncertain respecting his future state and prospects*, is the principal foundation of their ghostly influence,* it is rather too much to expect that they should do so; but, surely it is not impossible that the opposition of some of *them* even may be overcome, and that in our own day we may witness a repetition of that rarest and most astonishing of all the miracles of the Primitive Church, *a great company of the Priests obedient to the faith.* Acts vi. 7.

Had the adversaries of the doctrine of *the assurance of faith* restricted themselves in their opposition to it, to the use of what might fairly have been deemed legitimate arguments, I should at once have proceeded to shew, that

* See the quotation from Turretin, at page 9.

in the express declarations of scripture itself the basis of this doctrine is laid. But the mode of warfare resorted to by some of them, enforces a slight deviation from the line of procedure which otherwise I should have pursued. When men, in order to effect a particular purpose, can have recourse to reasonings, which, if admitted, would land us in utter and deplorable scepticism, it becomes necessary both for their own sake, and for the sake of those over whom they may have acquired influence, to attack and demolish their sophistry. The assumption by certain parties of *the fallibility of consciousness*, is a *ruse de guerre* so decidedly exceeding the utmost license indulged to theological controversy, that it deserves to be exposed. No soundly and profoundly thinking mind, it is true, can be led astray by such an argument; but all are not capable of thinking soundly and profoundly; and as persons belonging to the latter class are more numerous than those belonging to the former, it becomes necessary, with a view to *their* advantage, to shew up the fallacy involved in every representation that *our consciousness may deceive us.* Besides, thereby, even the most illiterate will be furnished with the means of getting rid of an argument which, in the hands of the artful and designing, may be turned to considerable account.

The next chapter, therefore, will be devoted to the consideration of the subject of consciousness.



CHAPTER II.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

The testimony of consciousness is always unerring, NOR WAS IT EVER CALLED IN QUESTION BY THE GREATEST SCEPTICS, ANCIENT OR MODERN.

REID on the Active Powers.

An account of some recent attacks which have been made on *the infallibility of consciousness*, will prepare the reader for understanding the nature of my defence of that doctrine, and constitute some sort of an apology for the time, pains, and space which I have devoted to the consideration of the subject.

Till within the last few years, I am not aware that any person, in the possession of his sober senses, ever dreamed of calling in question *the truth and infallibility of consciousness.* Men of every sect and party in religion concurred in receiving it as an axiom, that *whatever might be the feelings of an individual, or the thoughts passing through his mind, it was essential to their very existence that he should be conscious of them.*

To *feel* or *think*, and to *be conscious of feeling* or *thinking*, were regarded by every one who had any pretensions, however slight, to the character of a metaphysician, as identical modes of expressing ourselves. So thoroughly satisfied was Mr. John Barclay of Edinburgh—the author of a masterly work on *the assurance of faith*, to which particular reference will afterwards be made—of its being impossible, without grossly outraging the common sense of mankind, to deny the identity of *feeling*, and *the consciousness of feeling*, that with the utmost propriety he assumed this identity as one of the bases of his system; and declared, in his usual emphatic way, that if any man should dispute it, "he would despise his arguments, and think himself entitled to answer him with silence.*" But we live in sadly sceptical times. What, sixty years since, Mr. Barclay deemed it impossible for any sober minded man to assert, has in our day actually been maintained; and, strangely enough, his own work has been one of the principal means of calling forth this exhibition of perverted intellect. Shrewd and discerning Calvinists opposed to Mr. Barclay's system could not help perceiving, that to concede to him *the infallibility of consciousness*, while at the same time they agreed with him in maintaining that through faith in the divine testimony concerning Jesus we are necessarily interested in gospel blessings, was in reality to bring themselves under the necessity of conceding to him his conclusion likewise. For, granting that *consciousness* accompanies all the

* *Assurance of Faith Vindicated.* By John Barclay, A.M., p. 34, 3d ed.

operations of the mind, and that it is necessarily infallible, how could they maintain that a person actually believing the gospel might nevertheless be ignorant of his so believing, or be liable to fall into any mistake respecting the matter? To admit, however, the correctness of Mr. Barclay's theory, *that every believer of the gospel is infallibly certain of his own everlasting happiness,* suited neither the experience nor the interests of those opposed to him, and therefore they behoved to find out some loop-hole for retreat.. While the doctrine of *the infallibility of consciousness* was allowed to stand, escape was out of the question; and therefore to assail, and, if possible, to undermine this doctrine, the efforts of that portion of the Calvinistic body which may properly be denominated its *forlorn hope,* began to be directed. Regardless of consequences—careless as to the desolating scepticism into which, could they succeed, mankind would necessarily be plunged—these heroes have at length ventured to maintain, and even attempted to demonstrate, that *every man is liable to be imposed on by his own consciousness.* One of the *Christian sceptics* of whom I am now speaking, in an article written expressly on Mr. Barclay's work, after admitting that the whole controversy respecting assurance hinges on the question as to "the certainty of the evidence of consciousness," thus proceeds: "It is in the first place very plain that if the testimony of consciousness were infallible, there could be no such thing as self-deception; for consciousness is connected with all our mental acts and feelings. To explain how it

happens that a power which takes cognizance of what passes through our minds should deceive us by its testimony, would lead us too far into the philosophy of the human mind; but we may just remark, by the way, that if the operations of the mind were better understood by theologians, we should have far fewer of those unprofitable metaphysical vagaries which have so often perplexed the beautiful simplicity of Christian truth.* But one thing is plain, that if consciousness were a source of certain information as to the state of our minds, there could be no such a thing as self-deception. And is not self-deception just as inherent and universally prevalent in every human mind, as that depravity in which it originates? Are we not continually deceiving ourselves as to our characters, our propensities, our purposes, our passions, our faults, and every thing within us? With regard to belief itself we often deceive ourselves. One man tells us he believes there is no such thing as apparitions, and yet trembles in the church yard or lonely chamber. Another tells us he trusts in the credit and honour of a certain neighbour, but when put to the test he dares not commit his property to that neighbour's keeping. The same with regard to Christianity. There are multitudes who mistake for firm belief, what is little better than a negation of unbelief. They have a certain measure of knowledge respecting Christian truth and its evidences.

* How exquisitely modest, when we think that the writer is broaching a theory, not merely at variance with the views of the most eminent mental philosophers, but in opposition to the common sense of mankind.

These subjects pass before their thoughts from time to time, and have the appearance of reality, as clouds at a distance look like the solid land. The mind yields an indolent acquiescence; and this with many is believed to be faith."* But assaults on *the infallibility of consciousness* have not been confined to anonymous writers. Dr. Barr, of Port Glasgow, a popular clergyman of the established church of Scotland, who, without understanding the doctrine of *the assurance of faith*, has chosen recently to pour forth the vials of his wrath upon it, thus contributes his mite likewise towards promoting the reign of universal scepticism. "Is the primary act of believing then of such a nature as decidedly to manifest its own existence, and carry along with it a conviction of its genuineness and reality? To this question I reply in the negative. *I deny the possibility, in ordinary cases, of a man's knowing himself to be a believer, by the mere consciousness of believing.*"† Again: "I infer, therefore, from the nature

* Christian Herald for July, 1826. Article on Barclay's *Essay on the Assurance of Faith*, and Thom's *Memorial to the Presbytery of Glasgow.*

† This is "out-Heroding Herod" with a vengeance. Even the Arminians or Remonstrants themselves, much as their views have been decried by the Calvinistic Church of Scotland, never proceeded so far as this gentleman, who professes to be one of its members and to adhere to its doctrines, has done. The Arminians, in the account of their views which they submitted to the Synod of Dordt, allowed, as has been hinted in a preceding note, that *a believer may have present certainty respecting the genuineness of his faith.* Their words are: *Vere fidelis, uti pro tempore præsenti de fidei et conscientiæ suæ integritate certus esse potest; ita et* DE SALUTE SUA, ET SALUTIFERA DEI ERGA IPSUM BENEVOLENTIA, PRO ILLO TEMPORE CERTUS ESSE POTEST AC DEBET: *et ita Pontificiorum sententiam improbamus.* Sentent. Remonstran. de perseverantia. Th. 7.—Act. Synod. Dordrecht. p. 118. These poor Remonstrants

of the Gospel Revelation, *that our belief in it must be ascertained by other evidence than the conscious feeling of such a belief.* It proposes to us not a mere narration of historical facts, nor a system of abstract and speculative notions, with which the understanding and the judgment are alone concerned. It speaks directly to the conscience and the heart in the proclamation of certain moral truths, relative to the perfections of God, the condition of man, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, our assent to which necessarily involves the exercise of certain moral principles and feelings, *which may exist without our being immediately conscious of them, the reality of which, therefore, cannot be determined, but by their operation and effects.*"* That Dr. Barr's authority in matters of this kind is deemed respectable, and that his brethren in the ministry are far from regarding with disapprobation the nature of the efforts made by him to promote the good cause of *doubts and fears*, I gather from the favourable testimony borne to his work by a brace of orthodox Scotch D. D.'s of considerable eminence. By one of them it is styled, Dr. Barr's "admirable sermon on peace in believing,"*

appear to have been most anxious to satisfy their clerical brethren that there was a difference between the views of *assurance* entertained by them, and "the doubtsome faith" of the Papists. But some of our modern Calvinists, casting aside all such delicacy of feeling, are quite willing and ready openly to concur with the Romish Church, in again erecting that system of *doubts and fears* which it was the object of Luther and his immortal coadjutors to destroy.

* *The Peace of Believing distinguished from Antinomian Assurance.* By James Barr, D.D., Minister of Port Glasgow, p. 19, 20, 21, 1829.

† *The Gairloch Heresy tried, &c.* By the Rev. Robt. Burns, D.D. F.S.A. Minister of St. George's, Paisley, p. 6, 3d edition, 1830.

and the other hesitates not to assert, that "Dr. Barr, in his sermon on the peace of believing, has in a masterly manner proved, that the Antinomian assurance of salvation is unattainable, unnessary, and injurious."* To the approbation expressed by the two divines alluded to, may be added that of the Edinburgh Christian Instructor, the well-known and talented oracle of the Calvinistic Party of the Church of Scotland, which, in its number for May 1830, asserts, that "the sermon is written with much ability, and is calculated to be extensively useful."† What conclusion can I draw from commendations couched in terms so strong and flattering as those just quoted, but that Dr. Barr, in the course pursued by him, has the decided approbation of the leaders of our Spiritual Zion? And if men, otherwise knowing and sensible, and by their education, rank in life, and general talents, exercising a great and commanding influence over the minds of the religious classes of the community, can thus so far forget themselves, as, in their anxiety to carry a favourite point, to attack what the common sense of mankind has hitherto agreed in respecting as sacred, is it not incumbent on those who know better, although even at the risk of

* *Remarks on certain opinions recently propagated respecting Universal Redemption, &c.* By William Hamilton, D.D., Minister of Strathblane, p. vii. 1830.

† It is true *The Instructor* has somewhat qualified its approbation of Dr. Barr's sermon, by confessing "that, from certain modes of expression adopted by him, he has given some little ground for the strictures" of one of his antagonists: but this is said without any allusion to his remarks respecting *consciousness*, which are previously quoted in such a way as to intimate an entire acquiescence in them on the part of the editor.

appearing to demonstrate truisms, to expose the sophistry and put down the pretensions of such reckless and desperate combatants? The reader must have been struck at the coolness and effrontery with which the editor of the Christian Herald and Dr. Barr allow themselves to sport opinions, absolutely irreconcilable with the fundamental principles of the philosophy of Locke, Reid, and Stewart. Is presumption like this to pass unnoticed? A little attention to what follows, will, I hope, satisfy such of my readers as may have been puzzled by the daring nature of the assaults made on *the certainty of the evidence of consciousness*, that those from whom they have proceeded require, notwithstanding all their arrogance and dogmatism, to be taught what are *the first principles of metaphysics*, no less than what are *the first principles of the oracles of God.*

The term consciousness signifies *that knowledge of its own sensations, thoughts, and volitions, which the mind of every one possesses.* By Mr. Locke it is defined to be "the perception of what passes in a man's own mind."* There are trains or associations of ideas continually presenting themselves to our minds while we are awake, of the existence of which, as they present themselves, we are aware or *conscious;* and, therefore, when we say that human beings are possessed of *consciousness*, our meaning simply is, that at the very moment when they are taking place, human beings

* *Essay concerning the Human Understanding.* B. 2, c. 1, s. 19.

have a knowledge of the various operations and revolutions of their own minds.

In the definition just given, it is implied, that consciousness is essential to and must accompany all our mental phenomena. Let the supposition be made that any one sensation may be felt, any one idea entertained, or any one act of memory exerted, to which consciousness is not privy, and does not such a supposition carry on the face of it a gross and palpable contradiction in terms? A sensation—an idea—a recollection existing, and yet the mind unconscious of their existence! Why even the most uneducated perceives that the thing is absurd. To say, that *the mind is affected in any particular way*, and that *it is conscious of being so affected*, the very clown knows to be synonymous modes of expression. Well might the great philosopher, to whose definition of consciousness I have just alluded, when treating of a kindred subject, thus emphatically observe: "I do not say there is no soul in a man because he is not sensible of it in his sleep: but I do say that *he cannot think at any time waking or sleeping without being sensible of it. Our being sensible of it is not necessary to any thing but to our thoughts; and to them it is, and to them it will always be necessary, till we can think without being conscious of it.**

Still farther, it must be apparent, that the only proof which we have, or can have, of the present existence of

* Locke on *the Human Understanding*. B. 2, c. 1, s. 10. Title, *Consciousness essential to thinking*. In the passage quoted, it will be observed that Mr. Locke employs the word *sensible* as synonymous with *conscious*.

any particular sensation, or mental phenomenon, is merely *the fact of its existence;* or, if any one be fond of employing circumlocution to express that which is abundantly plain without it, the only proof of its present existence is, *the consciousness of the fact of its existence.* If my *consciousness* cannot afford me information with regard to what is passing in my own mind, from what other quarter, pray, can such information be derived? Not surely from my fellow men, for the *internal* changes which my mind is undergoing, except in so far as they are developed by *external* acts and circumstances, neither lie open to the inspection, nor are cognizable by the senses of others.* Not from *reasoning,* for this is a question of *fact.* Not from *reflection,* for as that faculty rests on *consciousness* or *present knowledge* as its basis, the evidence which it affords can never be *more certain* than that of *consciousness itself.* If, then, my *consciousness* or *present knowledge* be not to me sufficient evidence of *what is felt by me,* or *is passing within my mind,* at any given moment, I must e'en be content to remain without satisfaction as to the point altogether.

It also results from the very nature of consciousness, as above defined, that it must be infallible. The cause, and the only cause of the existence of *consciousness* at any time, is the existence in the mind of some particular sensation, thought, or volition, or of some particular train of sensations, thoughts, or volitions. This being the case, to suppose the mind to have the consciousness

† Can another man perceive that I am conscious of any thing, when I perceive it not myself?—Locke, *ut supra.*

of any sensation, thought, or volition, when in reality no such sensation, thought, or volition exists, is equivalent to supposing the existence of *an effect* without *a cause*. The *consciousness of mental phenomena*, thus always and necessarily implying *the existence of the phenomena themselves*, or, in other words, it being impossible that *where certain mental phenomena are not, there the conciousness of such phenomena should be*, what more is requisite in order to prove *that consciousness never can deceive us*, or, *that it is infallible*.

It is, I presume, almost superfluous for me to add, that all the above observations relative to *consciousness*, are, in their fullest extent, applicable to *the consciousness of believing*. When the mind is persuaded of the truth of a testimony, that is, believes it, in the first place, it must be *conscious that it so believes*—in the second place, it never has nor can have any evidence *that it believes*, superior to the fact of its *consciousnes that it believes*—and, in the third place, there can be no mistake in regard to the matter, for, *the consciousness of belief can only exist*, in consequence of *the belief itself actually existing*. Let any man, whether making pretensions to philosophy or not, overturn these averments by dint of facts and fair reasonings, and he shall be my *magnus Apollo*.

Do I require to support my views of consciousness by the authority of names ranking high in the department of metaphysics? If so, the language of the following eminent philosophers will surely be acknowleged to bear me out in all my assertions.

Mr. Locke thus pointedly expresses himself:—"Can a man think and not be conscious of it?———It is altogether as intelligible to say that a body is extended without parts, as *that any thing thinks without being conscious of it, or perceiving that it does so.* They who talk thus may with as much reason, if it be necessary to their hypothesis, say, *that a man is always hungry, but he does not always feel it; whereas hunger consists in that very sensation, as* THINKING CONSISTS IN BEING CONSCIOUS THAT ONE THINKS."* "It is by the immediate evidence of consciousness," says the late Professor Stewart of Edinburgh in his elegant and instructive work on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, "that *we are assured of the present existence* of our various sensations, whether pleasant or painful; of all our affections, passions, hopes, fears, desires, and volitions. It is thus too *we are assured of the present existence* of those thoughts which during our waking hours are continually passing through the mind, and of all the different effects which they produce in furnishing employment to our intellectual faculties.†" Clear and explicit, however, as are the declarations of Locke and Stewart, the following testimony to the infallibility of consciousness borne by Dr. Reid, will be al-

* Locke on *the Human Understanding.* B. 2. c. 1. s. 19. In the passage from which the extract in the text is taken, Mr. Locke is endeavouring to prove that *the soul or mind does not always think.* Such as are desirous to see the whole of this subject treated in the author's usual masterly style, should read carefully from the beginning of the tenth, to the end of the twentieth sections of the chapter quoted from.

† *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.* Part 2. chap. 1. s. 2.

lowed by all who are capable of appreciating the merits of that profound metaphysician, to supersede the necessity of farther quotations. "The operations of our minds are attended with consciousness; *and this consciousness is the evidence, the only evidence which we have or can have of their existence.* If a man should take it into his head to think or say *that his consciousness may deceive him,* and to require proof that it cannot, *I know of no proof that can be given him;* he must be left to himself as a man that denies first principles, without which there can be no reasoning. *Every man finds himself under a necessity of believing what consciousness testifies, and every thing that has this testimony is to be taken as a first principle.*"*

To those who have made the science of pneumatology their study, the whole subject of consciousness must be abundantly manifest. But for the sake of such of my readers as may be inexperienced and unskilful in researches of this kind, it will be proper to try, if possible, to simplify it still farther. There are two questions which although in reality quite distinct, are not unfrequently confounded by the ignorance of some, and the craft and subtilty of others. The one is, why do you believe? The other, how do you know that you believe? In answer to the former of those, I am obliged to state the grounds, reasons, or evidences, upon which my faith rests, and the causes by which it has

* Essay on *the Intellectual Powers of Man*, by Thomas Reid, D.D. Essay 1. c. 2. p. 39, quarto edition, 1785.

been produced. But the answer to the latter question, if I should deem it worth my while to return any answer at all, is, in every case, without a simple exception, *I know that I believe, just because I believe;* or, if another mode of expressing the same thing be preferred, *I know that I believe, just because I am conscious of believing.* The reason for my treating the two questions so differently is obvious. The former is proper and legitimate, and as the Christian *should be ready to give to every man that asketh him, a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear,*† it demands, and should receive a full and explicit answer. But as the man who puts the latter question to me, can only intend thereby either to insult me by insinuating doubts of my veracity, or to puzzle and perplex me, the scriptural advice, *to answer a fool according to his folly,* deserves here to be attended to. Now, in shewing *the infallibility of consciousness,* I am merely pointing out the grounds, and vindicating the propriety of the answer which I recommend every man to return to the latter of the two questions alluded to. I am endeavouring to assert the outraged rights of common sense—to bring men back to a point concerning which the most illiterate peasant is as competent to judge as the most enlightened plilosopher—and to expose the unfair nature of the controversial weapons of which artful and designing men are but too ready to avail themselves.

No objection, it is probable, would ever have been made to my remarks respecting *the infallibility of*

† 1 Peter iii. 15.

consciousness, had the affairs and circumstances of this present world merely been concerned. But as religion happens to be the subject matter in question, and as the admission of the correctness of my statements and reasonings would involve ultimately the complete overthrow of the power of the priesthood, I expect, if this work should happen to attract any notice, to have all that the ingenuity and sophistry of the human mind can devise set in array against me. The dictates of common sense, and the uniform experience of mankind will, it is probable, be entirely disregarded; and reasonings so futile and self-contradictory, that one would be ashamed to have recourse to them in the affairs of ordinary life, are but too likely to be adduced as valid, and pleaded as decisive, with reference to the point in dispute. Were it not that I am always unwilling to bring a charge of insincerity against any man, when his language and conduct are susceptible of being explained on other and more honourable principles, I should be tempted to say, that it is morally impossible for those who assert that consciousness, in any case, or under any circumstances, may deceive us, to credit their own statement. When arguments which, if plainly expressed, a man of the most ordinary understanding would hoot at, and which only require to be applied to some common-place subject in order to be convicted of absurdity, can be gravely and seriously propounded in discussions concerning religion, how difficult to avoid coming to the conclusion, that they have been got up merely to serve a purpose; and that

those who employ them are not speaking agreeably to the convictions of their own minds? I am ready to admit that human beings are perhaps as frequently the dupes of their own fallacies, as engaged in systematic attempts by means of these to impose upon others; but can we, except on the hypothesis of the existence of some very dreadful obliquity of understanding indeed, give credit for their sincerity to those, by whom *the certainty of the evidence of consciousness* has been assailed? The following are a few of the methods by which the *coryphæi* of the popular theology, have endeavoured to stifle the voice of common sense, and throw dust in the eyes of their partisans, with respect to the subject of *consciousness;* and after attentively considering them, and the manner in which their fallacy is exposed, let the impartial and enlightened reader say, if he can arrive at any other conclusion, than that of either the gross insincerity, or the gross folly, of those who have employed them.

1. It has been alleged that "because our *consciousness* is continually deceiving us in regard to our characters, propensities, purposes, passions, and so on, therefore, our *consciousness of believing* deserves to be viewed with suspicion, as a possible source of self-deception, likewise." If the authors of this objection had said merely, that we were continually liable to commit mistakes when thinking of the past operations of our minds, and when endeavouring to form a correct estimate of that compound idea which we denominate character, the fact, although nothing to the purpose,

could not have been disputed. But when they ascribe our *liability to be deceived* in such thoughts and operations to *consciousness*, they must be informed that they are guilty of a decided abuse of language. The merest tyro in metaphysics knows, or should know, that when the operations of our own minds become the subject matter of consideration, we are not said, speaking philosophically, *to be conscious of them*, but *to reflect upon them*. That is, the persons who make the present objection, commit the *trifling* blunder of confounding *consciousness*, with the faculty of *reflection*. And yet, strange to tell, no two things can be imagined which differ more widely from each other in their nature and functions, than do these two powers of the human mind. Consciousness is the knowledge of *present mental states, feelings, and operations;* reflection has for its object *those which are past*. Consciousness is conversant with *all that passes through the mind;* reflection takes cognizance only of *those mental phenomena with which memory supplies it*. In consciousness the mind is *passive*, it being impossible for any person to help knowing what is occurring within; in reflection, on the contrary, there is implied *an act* or *effort of the mind*. Consciousness is *as perfect* in the idiot as in the man of sense and education; *as perfect* in the child as in the adult; *as perfect* in him whose other faculties have been impaired by dissipation, old age, or any other cause, as in him who is still in the enjoyment of the bloom and vigour of manhood; but to the due performance of an act of reflection, the exercise of *memory, attention*, and

judgment, or *a certain degree of maturity of understanding,* is indispensably requisite.* There being thus so marked and obvious a difference between *consciousness* and *reflection,* when I find the one confounded with the other,—as is done by every person who from *our liability to be deceived in attempting to think of the past operations of our minds,* ventures to draw a conclusion as to *our liability to be deceived in our*

* "Consciousness is a word used by philosophers to signify that immediate knowledge which we have of our present thoughts and purposes, and in general of all the present operations of our minds. Whence we may observe that consciousness is only of things present. To apply consciousness to things past, which is sometimes done *in popular discourse,* is to confound consciousness with memory; and all such confusion of words ought to be avoided *in philosophical discourse.*—As by *consciousness* we know certainly the existence of our present thoughts and passions, so we know the past by remembrance.—It is to be observed that we are conscious of many things to which we give little or no attention. Our attention is commonly employed about that which is the object of our thought, and rarely about the thought itself. Thus, when a man is angry, his attention is turned to the injury done him, or the injurious person; and he gives very little attention to the passion of anger although he is *conscious* of it.—It is in our power, however, when we come to the years of understanding, to give attention to our own thoughts and passions, and the various operations of our minds. When we make these the objects of our attention, this act of the mind is called *reflection.*—The power of the understanding to make its own operations its object, to attend to them, and examine them on all sides, is the power of reflection, by which alone we can have any distinct notion of the powers of our own or of other minds.—All men are *conscious* of the operations of their own minds at all times while they are awake; but there are few who *reflect* upon them, or make them objects of thought.—I conceive this is sufficient to shew the difference between *consciousness* of the operations of our minds, and *reflection* upon them; and to shew that we may have the former without any degree of the latter."

Such is the clear and distinct view of the difference between *consciousness* and *reflection,* given by Dr. Reid, in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man.* To his statement I would just add the following testimony of Mr. Locke: "Reflection is that power by which the mind turns its view inwards, and observes its own actions and operations." Locke *on the human understanding.*

knowledge of those which are present—if I am to suppose that there is no *mala fides* in the case, what alternative remains, but that I presume the grossest ignorance of metaphysics? Had Mr. Barclay, or had the writer of these pages maintained, that a believer of the gospel was not liable to fall into error when attempting to *reflect* on the mental operations of which he had previously been *conscious*, and especially when attempting to form an idea of what is implied in the abstract term *believing*, then, indeed, with the utmost propriety, might our views have been stigmatized as no less absurd than unscriptural. But in what respect, or on what grounds do we lie open to censure, when the proposition for which we contend is, that just as certainly as any testimony *is understood and believed in by us*, just so certainly *are we conscious of understanding and believing it?* Till the sapient editor of the Christian Herald and Dr. Barr arose, every one, whatever his religious sentiments might be, was contented to regard this as a harmless truism, which it would be idle to controvert, and impossible to overturn. To the anonymous critic, and his clerical coadjutor, was reserved the singular honour, not only of assailing this position, but of assailing it in a way demonstrative of their own total ignorance of the very first principles of metaphysical science. *Consciousness* confounded with *reflection!* How absurd! I am well aware that consciousness can supply us with no information respecting the truth or falsehood of any testimony which we believe, nor was it ever asserted by Mr. Barclay or myself that it could

do so; but in the event of any testimony—no matter what it may be—being credited by us, consciousness can certify to us, aye and that infallibly too, that such is the fact. And this from the circumstance of *believing*, and *the consciousness of believing*, necessarily accompanying one another. Well, however, would it have been, had verbal inaccuracy been the only evil occasioned by the confounding of *consciousness* with *reflection*. But crafty individuals having discovered that, by thus dexterously confusing matters, they might at pleasure control and keep in thraldom the consciences of their fellow men, were not slow in availing themselves of a weapon of such tremendous power. Although, as has been observed, there are no differences subsisting among the human race as to *consciousness*—it being as perfect in one man as in another—nevertheless mankind are very differently constituted as to *their powers of reflection*. Few are qualified to *reflect* with only tolerable accuracy;* and even those who from habit, superior understanding, or both, have made the greatest attainments in this exercise, cannot always take up in their exact order the various mental phenomena which at any given time had presented themselves,—cannot always be sure that these are unmixed with events which happened on other occasions,—and cannot always separate the immediate subject matter of their reflections from foreign and adventitious topics. So great being the difficulties connected with the subject, how readily may some

* "Most men seem incapable of acquiring it" (the power of reflection) "in any considerable degree." Reid on *the intellectual powers*.

knowing and unprincipled individual, throw the mind of his honest and unsuspecting but illiterate neighbour into a state of perplexity, by proposing to him as a question to be answered by his *consciousness,* what is in reality an appeal to his *powers of reflection.* If the latter should declare, "I believe the gospel;" and if the former should immediately inquire, "are you sure that you believe it?" unless the question be a studied insult, it is a perfect abuse of language, to represent the person thus catechised as being required only to consult his *consciousness.* In saying that he believed, if he spoke the truth, he had already declared what *consciousness* suggested to him. To call on such a person to investigate into his own certainty of believing, is in reality to call on him to perform *an act of reflection*— one of the most difficult exercises of the human mind,— and as, should he make the attempt, he will, in all probability, stumble at the threshold, a few additional well-directed questions on the part of his wily and practised catechist, is all that is necessary to throw him into a state of the greatest uneasiness. Many a worthy individual who, if required to give a plain and straightforward account of his present views with respect to religion, both could and would do so without hesitation, has, I am persuaded, had his mind perplexed and bewildered, in consequence of some dexterous antagonist having induced him to attempt an investigation, for which, defect of ability, or, at all events, his previous habits and pursuits, had utterly disqualified him. How much better if every such person, when assailed by

ensnaring questions of the description alluded to, would be contented to answer with the poor man in the gospel when similarly circumstanced, *one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.**

2. Our liability to be deceived by *consciousness* has been gravely inferred from the fact, that "what men profess to believe is but too frequently at variance with their practice." How absurd this kind of reasoning, when a simpler as well as much more satisfactory solution of the discrepancy, will at once suggest itself to every reflecting mind. The argument, to be at all available, must proceed on the supposition that what a man *professes to be conscious of*, he is always *in reality conscious of*; or, that *consciousness*, and the *profession of consciousness*, are always and necessarily convertible terms; a position which, if true, would no doubt prove fatal to Mr. Barclay's system. But what authority have those who make this supposition for doing so? I grant that "a man may tell me he believes there is no such thing as apparitions, and yet may tremble in the church-yard, or the lonely chamber." I grant that "another may tell me he trusts in the credit and honour of a certain neighbour, and yet when put to the test may not chuse to entrust his property to that neighbour's keeping." But how, in the name of common sense, does this tend to establish the alleged fact, that "mankind are liable to be deceived by consciousness?" It is perfectly true, that if in either or both of the cases supposed the individuals speak in reality and exactly

* John ix. 25.

according to their consciousness, and if in the interval between their profession, and their failure when put to the test, no change of views with regard to the respective topics shall have occurred, then undoubtedly consciousness may deceive us, and the cause for which I contend must be abandoned. But are the truthfulness of both individuals, and the fact of no change of views having occurred, to be assumed without any attempt at proof? What if the true solution of the phenomena in question should be, that the one individual desirous to obtain my good opinion of his courage, and the other unwilling to embroil himself with his neighbour by hinting suspicions of his solvency, have avowed sentiments, which, so far from being agreeable to their consciousness, that faithful witness disclaims as thoroughly inconsistent with its suggestions? Would there be any thing incredible in all this? Observe, the point in dispute is, *may consciousness deceive us?* and what I complain of is, that, in order to prove the possibility of consciousness doing so, the identity of *consciousness* and *the profession of consciousness*, is at once and unhesitatingly assumed. One man expresses a courage, and another a confidence, which the event demonstrates neither the one nor the other to possess; and yet, in the true spirit of sophistry, it is immediately assumed, that the *consciousness* of both must be at fault! Were it not that I have too good an opinion of the understandings of the persons who have had recourse to these illustrations and reasonings, to suppose that they themselves can have been imposed on by them, how difficult would it be,

when listening to them, to help laughing outright at their folly. *Quid risum teneatis ?* True it is, that did the human race, by always speaking according to truth, realize the account given by Swift of his Houyhnhmns, a man's assertions might be received without hesitation, as the infallible index and expositor of his real sentiments. But when the fact is notoriously the reverse—when men's professions of believing and disbelieving are so constantly and unequivocally regulated by selfish and interested motives, that to give the lie to one's own convictions is matter of every day's experience—what thorough paced sophistry—what arrant folly is there not exhibited in assuming as necessarily agreeable to the consciousness of the individuals by whom they are made, professions which are contradicted by the subsequent conduct of these individuals? It will not mend the matter to inform me, that human beings may mistake their own characters, and suppose themselves to be actuated by motives and principles to which they are in fact utter strangers; for, though I were to concede this, so far from proving our liability to be deceived by *consciousness*, it would merely prove that we were liable to be mistaken in our attempts at *reflection*, and consequently would bring the present fallacy under the head upon which I have already been animadverting. It is clear that men may be led into error *by inability to reflect*, and that they may be the means of leading others into error *by professing to be conscious of views and feelings which they do not really possess*, (a circumstance, by the way, which easily and satisfactorily accounts for the annals of

martyrology not being more bulky and appalling than they actually are, and for the adherents of established churches being always so numerous as we find them to be), but upon what principles, pray, does either the one fact or the other tend to prove, that a man may be deceived by *consciousness itself?*

3. It has been argued that "we are liable to be deceived by *consciousness,* because we frequently receive and regard as true, what in reality is false." This translated into other and simpler language is, because we are liable to be deceived by *what we believe,* or by *the subject matter of our belief,* therefore, we are liable to be deceived by *the consciousness of believing!* Is there any man acquainted with the mere elements of metaphysics, who can become the dupe of a fallacy like this? Strange to tell, however, this is one of the strongholds of the opposers of Mr. Barclay's system; and as it has been found by them to be extremely useful, in enabling them to prolong their spiritual despotism over the minds of the illiterate and the unreflecting, it will be proper to bestow a few observations upon it. I do not deny that a man may frequently believe that to be true, which in reality is false,—for instance, "that he may mistake clouds for solid land." But to suppose it proved by this undeniable fact, that *consciousness* may deceive us, is to misapprehend or misrepresent the subject matter in dispute entirely, for, the question is not, *may a person mistake a shadow for a substance?* but, *may he, while supposing the shadow to be substance, be conscious of supposing the reverse? Can he*

while actually viewing a subject in one light, be conscious of viewing it in another? This is the real state of the question, and to this I must fix down the adversaries of Mr. Barclay's scheme. A man's consciousness unquestionably would deceive him, if, while he was believing that the clouds were solid land, *it were to inform him that he actually believed them to be clouds;* but will any person in his sober senses venture to assert that consciousness is capable of thus imposing upon us? The fact is—and where religion is not concerned every soundly judging man will at once admit it—that supposing us for a time to believe a testimony which we afterwards find out to be false, we are—while we believe it—as certainly and infallibly conscious of our doing so, as if the testimony had in reality been true. This is as it ought to be, for the office of *consciousness* is not to supply us with information respecting what is true or false in external nature, or in the testimonies which from time to time are presented to us; but respecting the effects which the objects of external nature, or such testimonies, at any given moment, actually produce in our minds.* Now if con-

* Let us again listen to the language of Dr. Reid in reference to this subject. "It is to be observed that consciousness is only of things in the mind, and not of external things. It is improper to say, I am conscious of the table which is before me. I perceive it, I see it, but I do not say, I am conscious of it. As that consciousness by which we have a knowledge of the operations of our own minds, is a different power from that by which we perceive external objects, and as these different powers have different names in our language, and, I believe, in all languages, a philosopher ought carefully to preserve this distinction, and never to confound things so different in their nature." *On the Intellectual Powers.—E.* 1. *c.* 1.

sciousness discharge aright the duties of its own particular department—and who that understands the subject will venture to say that it does not so?—what right have I, or has any man, to complain, that it is not performing functions which do not belong to it? If it report to me faithfully what at any given moment is passing in my mind,—the only part which by its Creator it is qualified to act—what right have I to expect or exact from it information as to the truth or falsehood of testimony? The information conveyed to me by the five senses, although sufficiently accurate for the ordinary purposes of human life, is very far indeed from being infallible. I sometimes perceive every object around me tinged with a yellow hue, or I hear continually a noise resembling that which is produced by the beating of a drum, and yet it so happens that neither the one nor the other of these sensations has any other origin than a diseased state of the eye or the ear. But in both these cases, although undoubtedly I am deceived by my organs of sight and hearing, I am not deceived by my consciousness. It reports to me my sensations faithfully and accurately as they are. If I am conscious that every object around me appears to be yellow, or that I am annoyed by a disagreeable drumming sound, it is because the one or the other of these particular sensations actually exists. So likewise if for a time I am conscious of receiving as true, a testimony which afterwards I discover to be false, there is no deception practised upon me by my consciousness; for it informs me, and informs me truly,

of what for the time being is the actual persuasion of my mind. Thus then does it appear that it is the business of consciousness to report to us the various feelings, sentiments, and operations of our minds, *such as they are,* not *such as they ought to be*—to furnish us with exact information as to *what at any particular moment is passing within,* not to add to, correct, or verify *the information with which we are supplied from without.* The functions which belong to it, consciousness is found to discharge with the utmost faithfulness and incorruptibility. This being the case, what can we think of the capacity or intentions of those, who, because a testimony which I now believe may after all be false, and because its falsehood cannot be detected by consciousness, pretend thence to draw the conclusion, that consciousness itself may deceive me?

Such are some of the blundering and sophistical arguments respecting consciousness by which the system of Mr. Barclay has been assailed. The passage already quoted from the Christian Herald—which forms part of a review of Mr. Barclay's treatise on the assurance of faith, and the memorial which I submitted to the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1825—may be referred to as exemplifying, within a very narrow compass, every one of them. It confounds the consciousness of believing, with *reflection on our belief*—with *the profession of believing*—and with *the subject matter believed in.* There is something irresistibly ludicrous in the contrast between the pretensions to superior metaphysical acumen which it puts

forth, and the gross, glaring, and absolutely childish blunders with which it abounds. From the manner in which it is written throughout, what other conclusion can we can come to, than the total inability of its author to comprehend the question at issue; which is not, *whether certain religious sentiments be right or wrong?* but, *whether by the evidence of consciousness, a man can know his religious sentiments to be different from what they really are?* Surely Dr. Barr, when he ventured to deny "the possibility, in ordinary cases of a man's knowing himself to be a believer, by the mere consciousness of believing," had some better reasons for thus outraging the common sense of mankind than are brought out and insisted on by his anonymous critical coadjutor.

By re-inserting the passage already quoted from the Christian Herald, and pointing out in succession the mistakes committed by its author, my readers may be better able to understand the whole subject, as well as better able to appreciate the qualifications for their office possessed by many of those who undertake the useful and important but arduous task of criticism.

After remarking that the "certainty of the evidence of consciousness is the thing to be examined," the reviewer proceeds.

"It is, in the first place, very plain, that if the testimony of consciousness were infallible, there could be no such thing as self-deception"; (if *reflection* upon the operations of our own minds were infallible, there could be no such thing as self-deception); "for consciousness is

connected alike with all our mental acts and feelings." (This last remark with regard to consciousness is correct enough: let us now see what conclusion the critic proceeds to draw from it). "To explain how it happens that a power which takes cognizance of what passes through our minds, should deceive us by its testimony," (*consciousness* confounded with *reflection*), "would lead us too far into the philosophy of the human mind;" (a person who was calling in question what the rest of mankind, whether believers or unbelievers, had for nearly six thousand years held to be true, was bound to assign satisfactory reasons for his conduct); "but we may just remark, by the way, that if the operations of mind were better understood by theologians, we should have far fewer of those unprofitable metaphysical vagaries which have so often perplexed the beautiful simplicity of Christian truth." (Very true, abstractly considered; although, curious enough, as coming from a man who was taking on himself to attack the theories of, and read lectures on metaphysics to such writers as Locke, Reid, and Stewart). "But one thing is plain, that if consciousness" (?) "were a source of certain information as to the state of our minds, there could be no such a thing as self-deception." (*Consciousness* again confounded with *reflection*). "And is not self-deception just as inherent and universally prevalent in every human mind as that depravity in which it originates? Are we not continually deceiving ourselves as to our characters, our propensities, our purposes, our passions, our faults, and

every thing within us?" (In all this *consciousness* confounded as before.) "With regard to belief itself we often deceive ourselves. One man tells us he believes there is no such thing as apparitions, and yet trembles in the church-yard, or the lonely chamber. Another tells us he trusts in the credit and honour of a certain neighbour, but when put to the test he dares not commit his property to that neighbour's keeping." (In the two or three immediately preceding sentences, the critic commits one of two mistakes. If the supposed individuals speak *bona fide*, as the one has formed a false estimate of his own courage, and the other of his own confidence in his neighbour's credit and solvency, the error is one of *reflection*, or rather perhaps of *imagination*. But if they wilfully represent their views and feelings to be different from what they know them actually to be, the reviewer, in employing this circumcumstance as an argument against *the infallibility of consciousness*, is guilty of confounding *the profession of consciousness* with *consciousness itself*). "The same with regard to christianity. There are multitudes who mistake for firm belief, what is little better than a negation of disbelief." (*Consciousness* confounded with *reflection*). "They have a certain measure of knowledge respecting christian truth and its evidences." (Here, of course, it is *the object of faith*, or, *the subject matter believed in*, which the reviewer is speaking of). "These subjects pass before their thoughts from time to time, and have the appearance of reality, as clouds at a distance look like the solid land." (That is, mistakes

may be fallen into respecting *the subject matter believed in*, a point as to which no one ever doubted: besides *consciousness* is again confounded with *reflection)*. "The mind yields an indolent acquiescence, and this with many is believed to be faith." (That is, from premises which warrant a conclusion merely as to our liability to be deceived *by our defective powers of reflection*, as well as *by our senses*, and *by the subject matter of those testimonies which we believe in*, the author would have us to conclude, *mirabile dictu*, that we are liable to be deceived by *consciousness itself!*)*

Enough, and more than enough, has been said, to satisfy the intelligent and reflecting, that many grievous mistakes have been committed by the author of the foregoing quotation; but I would not be doing justice to my subject were I to pass over *the chief*, the *master fallacy* which pervades his whole review—a fallacy which lies at the bottom of almost all the reasonings by which Mr. Barclay's system has been assailed. When reduced to form, it is no doubt one of the grossest and most flagrant *non sequiturs*, that ever crossed the brain or issued from the pen of man; but this has not hindered it from exercising an influence over the minds of popular writers on the subject of *the assurance of faith*, of which none of them seem to have been aware.

* The remainder of the Christian Herald's critique, especially the very next paragraph beginning with the words, "there are, no doubt, *some things* in which consciousness *cannot deceive us*," is in the same felicitous style of blundering and self-refutation. But those who are curious in matters of this kind must be referred to the review itself. It will be found entire at Appendix B.

It is as follows. A person who is ignorant of the gospel may deceive himself by fancying that he is acquainted with it; ERGO, *one who actually does understand and believe it, is liable to be deceived by his consciousness or conviction that he does so!* Absurd in the highest degree as reasoning like this is, what other construction can be put upon the passage quoted from the Christian Herald, or upon the whole review of which it forms a part, than that the establishment of the conclusion exactly as I have stated *it*, and that too from the premises exactly as I have stated *them*, is what the critic aims at? If his argument be not, that because men in numerous cases deceive themselves with regard to their belief, therefore, *they cannot in any case possess absolute certainty with regard to it*, then what, pray, is its drift or value? And yet, if to shew that a certain measure of doubt is essential to our belief be—as indeed in the paragraph immediately following that which I have quoted he avows to be—the end at which he is aiming; then, in addition to all those errors of which I have already convicted him, and especially the error of confounding *liability to be deceived by the subject matter believed in*, with *liability to be deceived by the consciousness of believing*—an inference being drawn from the *unquestionable* possibility of the former, to *the more than questionable* possibility of the latter,—he becomes chargeable with misapprehension or misstatement of Mr. Barclay's views, as well as with reasoning in the absurd and inconclusive manner just pointed out. What Mr. Barclay contended for

was, that *no person who is in reality acquainted with divine truth, is liable to be deceived by his consciousness that he is so.* (A tolerably clear and incontrovertible proposition, one would think). But the point which the reviewer labours to establish, and by which he expects to be able to overturn Mr. Barclay's leading doctrine, is, that *many persons imagine themselves to understand and believe divine truth, who are, in reality, totally ignorant of it!* Now, is there a single man endowed—I do not say with metaphysical acuteness but—with plain common sense, who does not perceive, that so far from the positions of Mr. Barclay and the reviewer being inconsistent and incompatible, they may both be established without in the slightest degree interfering with one another? And that any attempt to render the reviewer's position the basis of an argument against the correctness of that of Mr. Barclay, can only proceed upon the principle of inferring from *our liability to be deceived by what is false, our liability also to be deceived by what is true!* Strange as the interpretation now given may appear to be, could I suppose that the reviewer had any meaning at all in what he wrote, I would find it difficult, if not impossible, to put any other upon his reasoning. His leading position is, that many persons are deceived by receiving *as true,* what in reality is *false.* The correctness of this is cheerfully admitted; but unless from it there can be drawn a conclusion as to *the possibility of a man's being deceived by his consciousness of believing what is true*—which of course there cannot—of what use or value is such an argument in

the controversy respecting *the assurance of faith?* Neither Mr. Barclay nor I ever denied that men ignorant of divine truth, may deceive themselves by fancying that they are acquainted with it. But, in the first place, we have denied, and do deny, that in such cases the deception is practised upon them by their *consciousness*, for that faculty reports to them the state of their minds just such as it is—and, in the second place, we deny, and defy the whole host of common place theologians to prove, that *the liability of persons who are ignorant of divine truth to fancy themselves acquainted with it*, affords the shadow of a reason *why those who are in reality acquainted with divine truth should cherish the suspicion, or should be capable of cherishing the suspicion, that they themselves, after all, may be labouring under the influence of self-deception likewise.* To shew that *the liability of the former class of persons to be deceived,* involves in it *the liability to self-deception of the latter class of persons likewise,* is the point which Mr. Barclay's opponents are called upon to establish, and failing which, all their arguments against that gentleman's theory must go for nothing. Let them produce an instance, (I am almost ashamed to state the challenge, but let the reader remember it is the absurd conduct of others that has forced me to it), let them produce an instance of a person who, *having actually believed the divine testimony, was deceived by his consciousness of having done so,* and I admit that Mr. Barclay's system is shaken to its very foundations. But as this has never yet been attempted—and while a glimmering of common

sense remains never will—wherein, pray, consists the conclusiveness of the argument, that, *because persons ignorant of the gospel may fancy themselves to be acquainted with it,* therefore, *persons who are in reality acquainted with it, should suspect the possibility of their being found after all to be ignorant of it?* After the length to which I have already carried out my observations on this subject, it would be to pay a very poor compliment indeed to the understandings of my readers, were I to suppose them unable to see through the fallacy of the reviewer, and the inconsequential nature of his reasoning; and yet, with a view to render the exposure of his paralogism complete, I cannot resist the inclination to try it on some other subject besides religion. What would be thought of that man, who, because a person ignorant of some particular science may fancy himself to be acquainted with it, should take it into his head to argue, that, therefore, a person who actually does possess the knowledge of it, is liable to be mistaken in his consciousness or conviction that he does so? Because a mere tyro in mathematics may, under the influence of vanity, form a false estimate of his geometrical attainments, does it follow, that Newton, Leibnitz, and Euler were mistaken in the estimate which they formed of their own stupendous mathematical knowledge? Because a man who has never seen some particular individual, may form an incorrect idea of that individual's personal appearance, does it follow that one who is on terms of the closest intimacy with him is liable to fall into the same mistake? Nay,—for it is proper to expose the argument in all its nakedness—although nothing

is more common than for those who are, comparatively speaking, ignorant of some particular art or science to *imagine* themselves adepts in it, can such persons ever, in point of fact, *be conscious of knowing* more concerning it than they actually *do know?* Can the man who *fancies* himself to be a profound mathematician, on the strength merely of his having gone through the first six books of Euclid, be actually *conscious of knowing* more than these six books? Were it not that the existence, in the pages of a respectable periodical, of the specimen of absurd and puerile reasoning which I have been engaged in refuting, leads to the conclusion that numbers may be entertaining the sentiments of its author, some apology, certainly, would be due to my readers for the length to which I have extended my criticism upon it.

Most readers, I presume, are by this time satisfied, that, the subject of *consciousness* is far from being a trifling or merely speculative one, and that incorrect notions concerning it are apt to exercise a most pernicious influence over the human mind. But lest I should have failed hitherto in convincing any of this, let me bring under their notice, very briefly, a few of the consequences to which a denial of *the infallibility of consciousness* necessarily leads.

1. To maintain that *consciousness may deceive us,* is to render our own conviction of the existence of a divine revelation *a matter of uncertainty.* When any man declares himself to be *certain* that a divine revelation exists, and that the collection of writings commonly

denominated the Holy Scriptures constitute that revelation, he means, if his words have any meaning at all, that he himself personally, and not another for him, is *certain*, or, if you will, is *conscious of being certain*, that this is the case. But, according to the theory of consciousness which I have been impugning, no man has a right to express himself thus decidedly. Although *conscious of being certain*, it is possible that after all *his consciousness may deceive him!* This conclusion, such as deny *the infallibility of consciousness* cannot avoid. For, were they, while avowedly holding *man's liability to be deceived by consciousness*, to pretend to hold likewise, that in *the consciousness of their certainty that the scriptures are a divine revelation there was no possibility of their being deceived*, they would obviously contradict themselves. To what, except to their *consciousness*, do they owe the knowledge of *their being thus certain?* and on what principle, except on that of assuming *the infallibility of consciousness*, that is, assuming *the very point which they deny*, can they know that *there is no possibility of their being deceived?* Such persons, then, as deny *the infallibility of consciousness*, and wish to be consistent with themselves, must allow, that when they speak of *their being certain that the scriptures are a divine revelation*, they merely mean to declare, that *they suppose or fancy themselves to be thus certain;* which is, in other words, to say, (no doubt the expression is ridiculous enough, but that is not my fault), *that they are and ever must be uncertain, of their being certain, that the scriptures are a divine revelation!*

2. A denial of *the infallibility of consciousness,* is subversive of the inspiration, and consequently of the divine authority of the scriptures. "Holy men of old," says Peter, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Now what proof did or could the sacred historians and prophets possess, that in committing to writing what had been dictated to them, they were under the influence, direction, and illumination of the Holy Ghost, but *the bare fact of their consciousness that they were so?* They *knew* or *were conscious* that a power, superhuman in its nature and effects, dwelt in them, and spake by them; and it is only on the supposition that in this *knowledge* or *consciousness* of theirs they could not have been mistaken, that we are warranted in receiving their writings as divine. "But consciousness," say some of the opponents of Mr. Barclay's system," is so far from being infallible, nay, is so dreadfully fallacious, that in regard to *every thing* which passes through the mind, we are liable to deceive ourselves." What follows from this, but that those, who on the sole authority of *consciousness* believed themselves to be the *amanuenses* of the Holy Ghost, may have been deceived in their conviction that they were so; and that we who, on the hypothesis of *the infallibility of consciousness,* have hitherto received their writings as divine, may be participating with them in their delusion.

3. To deny *the infallibility of consciousness* lands us in absolute scepticism. Consciousness, as we have seen, is the only source from which we derive *all our*

present acquaintance with the different and ever-varying phenomena of our minds.* As it is the sole authority upon which I know or can know that at any given moment I suffer painful or enjoy pleasurable emotions, so it is the sole authority upon which I know or can know that at any given moment I believe or disbelieve the evidence of testimony. To impeach the truthfulness and accuracy of the information conveyed by consciousness in any one case, therefore, is to bring against it a general charge of insincerity and incapacity: to render the information which it conveys to us in any one case suspicious, is to sap, undermine, and subvert the foundations of our knowledge altogether. For, as it is by consciousness alone that I know *the present existence* of all my mental feelings and operations, could I suppose, with the editor of the Christian Herald and Dr. Barr, that in any one case it might deceive me, why in any other case should I rely on its evidence? Upon the principles adopted and avowed by these gentlemen, am I not as liable to be deceived when *conscious* of being pricked by a needle, or injured by a blow, as when *conscious* of loving my children—or reposing confidence in the sincerity of a friend—or believing that the earth is spherical—or that two and two make four—seeing that consciousness is in all these cases alike, the only ground upon which I know that I experience the various states of mind enumerated? Let those who are the most zealous and embittered in their opposition to Mr. Barclay's sys-

* I say *all our present acquaintance*, for *reflection* is obliged to borrow all its stores from *consciousness*.

tem, and who, under the influence of their dislike to it, have ventured to call in question *the infallibility of consciousness*, pause for a moment, and reflect on the consequences to which their principles, if carried out to their legitimate extent, will inevitably conduct them. Let them enquire how, consistently with themselves, they can render the certainty of the evidence of consciousness in regard to present belief questionable, without rendering questionable likewise every view, feeling, and sentiment, which at the present moment, or at any future period, they may be conscious of entertaining. Nay, how they can render *the consciousness of believing* questionable, without rendering questionable also their own existence—for which they have no other and no higher evidence than that of *consciousness*—and thereby involving themselves in a scepticism as dreary and desolating as that of Pyrrho, Hume, or Berkeley. Will Dr. Barr, who has *ex cathedra* declared, that the gospel "speaks directly to the conscience and the heart, in the proclamation of certain moral truths, an assent to which necessarily involves the exercise of certain moral principles and feelings, which may exist *without our being immediately conscious of them*," have the goodness to inform us how this is possible? However, be it so. Let us, for the sake of argument, suppose, that the existence of "the moral principles and feelings" in question, instead of being discoverable by consciousness, can only be detected and ascertained "by their operations and effects." And yet, having done so, are we not, like those philosophers who

rested the earth on the back of an elephant, and the elephant on the back of a tortoise, merely carrying the difficulty back a step farther; for, how are we to ascertain the existence of these "operations and effects?" If consciousness is not to be trusted in when testifying to the existence of faith itself, why should it be trusted in when testifying to the existence of operations and effects flowing from that principle? If my consciousness may deceive me, by causing me to fancy that I believe a testimony, when in reality I am not believing it, may it not also deceive me by causing me to fancy that I perceive certain operations and effects in myself, when in reality they have no existence? In one word, where is that scepticism which would call in question *the infallibility of consciousness* to stop? If nothing else will weigh with those who, in order to evince their marked and rooted dislike to Mr. Barclay's system, have not hesitated to assert that *consciousness may deceive us*—let them, in the absolute and universal *Pyrrhonism* in which their views necessarily issue, read their condemnation.

No intelligent Christian reader can be at any loss now to see through a piece of contemptible twaddle in which our *would-be-pietists* are found continually indulging. "The scriptures are true," say they, "whether we believe them to be so or not." "The scriptures are true;" that is, if the person who employs this phraseology means what he says, the scriptures are true to him; or, he himself, and not another for him, knows them to be true. Horne Tooke, in his Diversions of

Purley, has clearly and satisfactorily shewn, that *truth* is a relative term, signifying *that which the mind trusts, confides, or acquiesces in.** Nothing is *true*, except in reference to *the mind of an intelligent being seeing it to be so.* He, then, who declares that "the scriptures are true," declares, if his words have any meaning at all, that these scriptures are *trewed, trowed,* or *trusted in by himself.* But this cannot be the meaning of those who make use of the phraseology in question, for, they are accustomed to add, "whether we believe them to be so or not." In other words, according to them, "the scriptures are true, or, are the subject matter of trust and confidence by us, *even although they should not be the subject matter of trust and confidence by us!*" What terms so fitting to be applied to language like this as arrant nonsense? And yet, perchance, there may be policy on the part of some individuals in thus expressing themselves. It is possible that in adopting the language in question they may have reasoned with themselves after this manner. "We are certain that the scriptures are

* In adopting the sentiments of Horne Tooke with respect to the meaning of the word *truth*, let me be understood as doing so *qualifiedly*. The following observations of that eminently acute philologist, I unhesitatingly acquiesce in.—"Like the other words, TRUE is the past participle of a verb which signifies *to think, to believe firmly, to be thoroughly persuaded of, to trow.*———This past participle was antiently written TREW; which is the regular past tense of TROW.—TRUE as we now write it, or TREW as it was formerly written, means simply and merely, that which is TROWED." *Diversions of Purley, part* 2, *pages* 402, 403. But from any attempt to make use of these premises as a means of subverting the certainty and infallibility of *divine truth*, or *that which is trowed on the authority of God*, that is, *truth itself*, John xiv. 6, I claim to be understood, on the principles advocated throughout this essay, as entering my marked and most decided protest.

true——but no—let us beware—were we to speak thus unqualifiedly, Mr. Barclay and his followers would at once take us up and say, 'then you must be certain that you have eternal life, seeing that eternal life is by these very scriptures declared to be necessarily and inseparably connected with the belief of the divine testimony! Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 14—16, 36. v. 24. xi. 25, 26. 1 John v. 1—10, 11.' In order to get rid of this conclusion, which would oblige us to admit the correctness of a theory which we abhor, let us intimate *the possibility of our being deceived by our consciousness that we believe the scriptures to be true.* Few will be able to detect the sophistry and double-dealing of our statement—nay, with many our mode of expressing ourselves will pass for the very acmé of humility. Let us, therefore, unhesitatingly proclaim, although in such language as shall as much as possible throw our glaring self-contradiction into the shade, that, notwithstanding our certainty of the scriptures being true, *we are not certain of this certainty of ours!*" Supposing me to be correct in my conjecture, that the expression in question may in certain cases have been adopted after some such soliloquy as this, can terms too strong and too severe be found to stigmatize the characters and conduct of those, who can thus deliberately allow themselves to impose on their fellow men?

It may appear to some of my readers, that I have devoted a disproportionate share of this treatise, to the refutation of an error which in reality refutes itself;

and which might, safely enough, have been left to be dealt with by the common sense of mankind. But let me put it to such persons, if it be possible too minutely to scrutinize, and too thoroughly to expose a fallacy, which, once admitted, is not merely subversive of Christianity, but of every kind and degree of knowledge? Besides, is there no advantage derived from collecting the scattered rays of common sense, and so blending them with the light of metaphysical science, as that both, when brought to bear with condensed and concentrated power upon error, shall at once utterly consume and destroy it? I have shewn, in the preceding remarks, that some have been found insane enough openly to assail, and impudently to deny, *the infallibility of consciousness.* But, I confess, it is not so much of such persons I complain. My chief indignation is reserved for those, who, while they pretend and profess to believe that *consciousness cannot deceive us,* are nevertheless found, in the course of their discussions, especially with the ignorant and the unwary, assuming and reasoning from principles, which rest upon the *fallibility of consciousness* as their basis. It is such sophistry and double-dealing, or, if those who have been chargeable with it shall be disposed to avail themselves of the alternative, such gross and remediless stupidity, which stirs my bile within me. And is it no advantage to the most illiterate, that, in consequence of the preceding remarks, they are furnished with weapons by which to combat and defeat all such unfair and irregular practices? Is it no advantage to them,

that, when men pretending to be their superiors in rank and attainments, can allow themselves to confound consciousness with *reflection*—with the *profession of consciousness*—and with *the particular feelings of which they are conscious*—they can now point out and expose to them their sophistry? That when from *our liability to err by believing what is false*, such persons would insinuate a conclusion as to our *liability to err by believing what is true*, they can now laugh to scorn so barefaced an attempt upon their credulity? My object in writing this essay is, of course, to be useful to all my readers, whether learned or unlearned; but the preceding remarks have been penned especially with a view to the advantage of the latter class of them. From my desire to simplify to this class of persons a subject somewhat difficult in its nature, I have been induced to embark in details, which to many may appear to be uncalled for. Such is my apology for the lengthened nature of the preceding observations: if it will not suffice, I have no other to offer.



CHAPTER III.

ETERNAL LIFE THE GIFT OF GOD.

This is the record, THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE; and this life is in his Son.

JOHN'S first epistle.

The preliminary objection derived from the alleged or insinuated *fallibility of consciousness* being thus disposed of, we approach unfettered and unembarrassed to the consideration of the main question. Is eternal life, according to the scriptures, bestowed upon us *conditionally* or *unconditionally?* Are there any terms which require to be complied with on our part, before we can attain to the possession and enjoyment of this privilege? or is it, as being bestowed on us independently of our fulfilment of any conditions whatever, literally and in the strictest sense of the phrase, *the gift of God?*

Upon the decision pronounced by the scriptures in reference to this matter, the whole controversy respecting *the assurance of faith* really hinges. If, according to the sacred volume, human beings must, while in this world, possess any qualifications, or perform any conditions, in order to entitle themselves to everlasting life, then, I readily admit, that it is not within the bounds of possibility for any man to be absolutely and infallibly certain with respect to his state hereafter. But if the language of scripture shall be found to be, that eternal life depends on no conditions whatever to be performed by us—nay, that it is so completely secured to us through the Son of God that nothing can interpose to prevent our ultimate enjoyment of it—then, the position for which I contend, that *all who believe this to be the divine testimony must possess a certain, infallible, and permanent peace of conscience, in the prospect of eternity,* will be fully and fairly established. In a word, as, on the one hand, the *conditionality* of the blessing necessarily infers doubt; so, on the other, it is only by a view of the blessing as *unconditionally bestowed,* that every kind and degree of doubt can be taken away.

It will be observed that I assume, without any hesitation, the existence of a necessary connection between *our being satisfied that eternal life is bestowed upon us,* and *our enjoyment of perfect peace.* The reason is, that I cannot conceive the possibility of framing a single objection to this, which it would be worth my while

formally to refute? I know it may be alleged, that "many excellent persons who believe eternal life to be the gift of God, are nevertheless much distressed and annoyed with fears respecting futurity?" But what is the fact? and what consequently the amount of the objection? Why, simply this, that many persons *who profess to regard eternal life as the gift of God,* not understanding the import of the terms which they employ, and, therefore, supposing that some qualifications must be possessed, or some conditions must be performed by them, in order to their entitling themselves to the blessing, *experience an uneasiness and unhappiness which always and necessarily stand connected with conditional views of the subject.* Before the objection can be sustained, it will be requisite to shew that the persons in question not merely *profess to regard eternal life as the gift of God,* but *actually understand what they profess;* for, if the charge of ignorance of the subject, and misapprehension of terms, which I have brought against them, can be substantiated—and this I shall afterwards endeavour to do—how absurd to pretend to argue from *the fact of such persons being liable to fears respecting eternity,* that *those who indeed believe eternal life to be bestowed gratuitously, and not on the footing of human merit, must be obnoxious to similar fears.* Nay, for I deem it right to probe the matter to the very bottom, whence is it that, in the case of those by whom *eternal life is truly apprehended as the gift of God,* doubts and fears concerning their future happiness can arise? By the terms of the supposition, they perceive eternal

life to be certainly and indefeasibly secured to them by the will of God; and, as they know the impossibility of that will being either changed or frustrated, what conceivable cause is there in which anxiety respecting their own personal enjoyment of eternal life should originate? That men who have a lurking suspicion of *some condition upon which eternal life depends not yet being fulfilled,* even although *they may profess to be regarding eternal life as the gift of God,* should from time to time feel and betray alarm respecting their destiny hereafter, is not to be wondered at—the existence of a feeling of this kind merely shewing that there is a discrepancy, perhaps in a great measure unknown to themselves, but not on that account the less certain, between *their real sentiments,* and *those which they are professing to entertain*—but that men who clearly perceive, and are fully satisfied, that *eternal life is unconditionally bestowed,* should be capable of feeling or betraying a similar alarm, is an idea which could only enter into, and be embraced by, a weak or a disordered intellect.

What then does the sacred volume declare concerning the principles on which God bestows life everlasting?

To this question, the apostle Paul, speaking under the influence and direction of the Holy Ghost, returns the following clear and explicit answer. *The wages of sin is death;* BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. Rom. vi. 23.

It appears to me impossible to conceive any proposition couched in terms less ambiguous, and less capable of

being perverted, than this. Not merely is *death*, as what man *deserves*, contrasted with *eternal life* as what man *does not deserve;* and the perfect gratuitousness of the blessing thereby established as fully and decidedly as language can well do so; but the whole value of the proposition as *causal*,* or as *the basis of the foregoing reasoning*, evidently depends on this interpretation being put upon it. Looking then at the pointedness and explicitness of the declaration before us, may we not conclude, that among men professing to regard the scriptures as a divine record, no controversy respecting *the fact of eternal life being gratuitously bestowed* can ever have arisen?

We may—but were we to do so, we should commit a most grievous mistake. Instead of the completely gratuitous nature of eternal life being generally acquiesced in by persons professing Christianity, there is actually no doctrine which has been more hotly contested by many among them than this. So perverse, indeed, is the spirit evinced in the discussions which have sprung up respecting this matter, as almost to tempt one to lay it down as a general principle, that the more explicit divine declarations are with regard to any particular point, the more likely is human ingenuity to be called into exercise for the purpose of evading them, and explaining them away. Every effort has been made to reconcile *eternal life as the gift of God*, with *human merit as in some one respect or another the procuring cause of it;* and when direct arguments have

* FOR, *the wages of sin, &c.*

failed, or would, if employed, have betrayed the weakness and hollowness of the cause, recourse has been had, in lieu of them, to the most miserable subterfuges, and the most bare-faced sophistry. Were it not that history, both sacred and profane, is little else than a series of proofs of the slow advance of truth, and of the almost insurmountable difficulties which that divine principle has had to encounter in asserting and establishing its rightful supremacy over the human mind, one would be apt *a priori* to reject the idea, that any man or body of men professing to reverence the word of God, could have been found exhibiting such rancorous and inveterate hostility to a doctrine contained in it, as has been done by those who have taken on them to contradict *man's unconditional enjoyment of life everlasting.* The perverted nature of the task seems, indeed, only to have had the effect of quickening and stimulating their ingenuity in their performance of it. It being thus notorious that attempts have been made to explain away the doctrine of *eternal life being gratuitously bestowed,* and that these attempts have in the estimation of some been successful, I deem it incumbent on me, at this stage of my treatise to shew, that so far from the doctrine in question depending on the employment of any single term, or the construction of any single sentence, it enters into the very substance, and is interwoven with the whole texture, of the volume of inspiration.

But how is this to be accomplished? While I consult usefulness, I am bound also to bear in mind the

necessity of brevity. As to examine every passage in which the gratuitous nature of eternal life is either directly or indirectly treated of, would be to transcribe and comment on a large portion of the sacred volume, such a course of proceeding is necessarily out of the question. The only way in which my object can be attained—consistently with a due regard to the patience of my readers—is by seizing upon and presenting a few general principles, connected with the subject, which pervade the sacred writings, the application of which to particular passages, those who are so disposed, and have the requisite leisure, may safely enough be left to find out. Besides, in order to arrest attention, and if possible quicken the operations of thought, it may not be amiss, I conceive, to avoid throwing all my arguments into a scriptural form. In so doing let me not be misunderstood. I am well aware that *the doctrine of eternal life being gratuitously bestowed,* as well as *every legitimate proof of it,* has and must have its origin in the scriptures. Indeed, I have no hesitation in laying it down as an axiom, that as we are indebted to divine revelation for all the doctrines of religion, so to the same sacred source we are indebted for every valid and conclusive argument which can be alleged in their support. I am satisfied that no man ever yet constructed an argument, upon the subject of religion, which would bear examination, in which he had not been anticipated by the prophets and apostles; and which he did not borrow either directly or indirectly from their writings. But, notwithstanding all this, when I consider the exceedingly diversified

nature of the constitution of the human mind—the very different kinds of evidence which are required to produce an impression on different individuals—and, above all, the fact of there being characters who would turn with disgust from reasonings presented to them in a scriptural form, who would be willing to listen to the same reasonings if stated to them otherwise—I have resolved, with a view to meet the exigencies, and accommodate myself to the dispositions, of the different classes of persons whom I may be addressing, not to bring forward all my proofs of *eternal life being gratuitously bestowed* directly from the word of God. I have resolved to provide presumptive arguments, for those who may be fond of and addicted to that kind of reasoning—and arguments drawn avowedly from the scriptures for those by whom inspired authority is held in reverence. My desire has been, by having recourse to every legitimate expedient, to induce my readers to pay particular attention to a subject, with superficial views of which professors of Christianity are but too apt to content themselves. The language of the sacred volume, in regard to the doctrine in question, is far from being ambiguous; bnt it is impossible that a doctrine upon which, as will in due time appear, the whole superstructure of divine truth rests, can be too fully, explicitly, or convincingly stated.

The presumptive arguments in favour of *eternal life being gratuitously bestowed,* upon which I intend insisting, are as follows.

The first is founded on analogy. Unless *eternal life* be in the strictest sense of the terms *the gift of God*, there is a marked and irreconcilable discrepancy between the manner in which *it* is bestowed upon us, and that in which we become recipients of *this present life*. As it is not to any previous acts or merits of ours, but to the will of our earthly parents, that we are indebted for our possession of the life that now is; so, to render the cases parallel, it is requisite, that not to any previous acts or merits of ours, but to the will of our Heavenly Father, we shall be indebted for our possesion of the life that is to come. Those who maintain that our enjoyment of everlasting happiness hereafter shall be, in any respect whatever, the result of our merits here, not only violate the analogy in question, but hold, in opposition to the plainest dictates of common sense, that although we are obliged to be indebted *entirely* to others for an *inferior* existence, we, nevertheless, shall be indebted *in part* at least to ourselvés for one that is *superior*. Let the reader remember, that I state the present argument merely as an analogical one; and that, apart from others, I attach no more importance to it than is due to arguments of a similar kind. *Valeat quantum*. And yet, as it is a fact that we are *entirely* passive in the reception of this present life, is there any better conceivable lesson which such a fact is calculated to teach us, than that we must be *equally* passive in the reception of life everlasting?

A second presumptive argument for *the gratuitousness of eternal life* is, the immense disproportion between

human merit, and *eternal life considered in the light of a reward*. Judging from the language used by a vast majority of the human race, both lettered and unlettered, when speaking of the subject of religion, one would be apt to conclude, that the disproportion in question, obvious as it is, had never suggested itself to their minds. *Human virtue* deserving *everlasting happiness!* Why, although there may be nothing remarkable in a sentiment like this floating in the brains of the superficial and unthinking, is there a single man pretending to reflection, who, after reducing it to a formal proposition, would venture to undertake its defence? *Merit* and *reward* necessarily bear to each other the relation of *equivalents;* but who that has considered the subject will venture to affirm, that *the highest virtues of a mere man*, can stand in the relation of an equivalent to a blessing which, properly speaking, is *the life of God?* John v. 26. 1 Timothy vi. 16. How can actions which by their nature are *finite*, deserve *an eternal*, that is, *an infinite reward?* Surely, to place these two things, *finite virtue*, and *an infinite reward*, in juxta position, must, of itself, without the addition of a single remark, be sufficient to ensure a conviction of their incongruity. If such, however, be the thoughtlessness, or obtuseness of intellect, of any of those whom I am addressing, that they cannot apprehend the discrepancy in question, instead of attempting to demonstrate what is evidently a truism, I would direct their attention to the following fact. More than one man of talent, who, during the period of health and vigour, has been a

stickler for virtuous actions,* if not *e condigno* at least *e congruo*, deserving everlasting life, and whose external conduct has been correct, has, like Bellarmin, at the approach of dissolution, betrayed the utmost uneasiness in the prospect of eternity. How, on the supposition of such persons having been really virtuous—of their having been really convinced that human virtue and eternal life were equivalents—and of their having been, at the close of their earthly career, in the possession of their senses—is this uneasiness of mind, on their part, to be accounted for?

The circumstance which furnishes me with my third presumptive argument for eternal life being gratuitously bestowed, is, that human merit invariably receives a reward in this present world in all respects commensurate with itself. The *vis consequentiæ* of this argument is, that he whose demands upon a superior are in any case whatever adequately satisfied, can neither claim nor receive any thing farther from that superior on the footing of merit. How amazingly and deplorably ignorant have men calling themselves Christians shewn themselves to be, in regard to the point of which I am now speaking. One can scarcely name a Christian writer of any eminence on the subject of a future state, who has not assumed it as an incontrovertible position, that human righteousness *is not rewarded here;*

* Or, if they prefer the phrase, *righteous actions*, or, *actions performed under the influence of divine grace.* Whatever may be the expression used, the moment that *the actions of mere man*, are supposed *in any way whatever* to deserve *an eternal reward*, the incongruity of which I am speaking becomes apparent.

and who has not employed this as one of his palmary arguments for *the necessity of an hereafter.* The rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice, in a future state, are, according to gentlemen of this stamp, the grand and peculiar discoveries for which we are indebted to the gospel! Thus, in their opinion, a future state, instead of being that for the sake of which this present world and all that it contains were called into existence, is merely an addition or appendage to this present world—a sort of make-weight thrown in by the Supreme Being to keep the scales of justice hanging even! Christian Divines have frequently, and I fear with too much reason, been accused of paying an undue deference to the opinions of heathen philosophers; but it might not have been amiss if they had taken a lesson from some of their supposed preceptors, in regard to human virtue, and the rewards to which it is entitled. The axiom of the Stoics and of some other antient sects, that "virtue is its own reward," would, had it been understood and attended to by the divines in question, have served to extricate them from a labyrinth of difficulties and inconsistencies, in which, for want of this clue, they have entangled and bewildered themselves. It is true, that the Stoics took occasion from their favourite maxim, either secretly to sneer at, or openly to deny, the possibility of a future state, and in so doing committed a most egregious blunder; the only inference which from their premises they were warranted to draw being, *that in the event of a future state of happiness existing, its privileges could not be conferred as the reward*

of human merit. But the error of their *conclusion,* cannot in the slightest degree militate against or vitiate their *premises,* which rest upon a foundation of the strength and solidity of which any reflecting mind may soon satisfy itself. The fact of *virtue,* or *human merit,* being adequately rewarded in this present world, is brought out and established by means of the three following propositions. 1st. *Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and the disobedient.** This is evident when we consider, that *laws,* properly speaking, consist of *prohibitions.*† 2dly. Laws, thus defined, never propose *rewards,* but threaten *punishments;* or, to express myself technically, they are *sanctioned* not by *rewards* but by *punishments.* As perhaps some persons will still in a cavilling spirit maintain, that *laws* do propose as their *sanctions* both *rewards* and *punishments,* be it observed that, in order to avoid all unnecessary disputation, I am ready to concede this point to them, provided they admit that such rewards are not *positive* but *negative;* or, that they consist merely in *an exemption from the penalties which are incurred by those by whom laws are violated.* It is astonishing how few, even of those who may be denominated learned men, understand this plain and obvious principle. The celebrated Warburton, in his *Divine Legation of Moses,* actually contends for two *positive* sanctions or modes of enforcing law, rewards and punishments; the for-

* 1 Timothy, i. 9. 10.

† See the language of the decalogue, Exodus xx. *Thou shalt not, &c.* See also the language of all human statutes which have a reference to crimes.

mer consisting in *remunerations*, the latter in *losses and sufferings*. He admits, it is true,—constrained by the evidence of facts,—that *human laws* do not propose *positively to remunerate;* but instead of being led to suspect that this in reality gives a death blow to his system, he endeavours to account for it by means of an absurd and fanciful hypothesis of his own; and pretends to find in *divine laws* those *positive remunerations*, of which *human laws* are confessedly destitute. Little does this distinguished man appear to have known, what, had he chosen to consult any petty attorney, he might have learned, that as *laws* consist, properly speaking, of *prohibitions*, it is inconsistent with their very nature *to propose rewards;* or, if you will, *to propose any other reward than the negative one of exemption from their penalties in the event of their not being disobeyed.* 3dly. The essence of all *punishment* is internal or in the mind, that is, it consists in *a sense of guilt* or *self-condemnation;* and, therefore, our *sufferings* can only become *punishments*, by being associated in our minds with a sense of *demerit* or *evil desert.* Understanding and admitting this, it follows, on the principle just stated, that the reward attached to human virtue by God, (if we must speak of God's rewarding man's obedience to his laws), must consist in *that exemption from a sense of guilt or self-condemnation which is necessarily connected with abstinence from evil, and which no sufferings, however acute and long-protracted, can destroy.* The application of these three principles to the present subject, as a presumptive

argument for eternal life being gratuitously bestowed, is easy and obvious. 1st. The circumstance of God's subjecting mankind to law, of itself shews, that they are liable to transgress.* Laws are unnecessary in the case of beings whose natures are perfectly righteous. 2dly. Laws being always attended with *threatenings of penalties* as their *sanction*, and the divine law being no exception to the general rule, human beings, in so far as they avoid disobeying the divine law, enjoy exemption from the infliction of the penalties threatened by it, as the only and the adequate reward of such conduct.† 3dly. The essence of punishment consisting in self-condemnation, and the essence of the only reward which law promises consisting in the absence of that feeling, every human being, in proportion as he acts up to and satisfies the dictates of conscience, enjoys as his appropriate and adequate reward an exemption from those feelings of remorse or self-condemnation, which, had he acted otherwise, he must have incurred. But human beings thus enjoying now in their exemption from a sense of self-condemnation *the exact reward* of their good deeds, how absurd, nay, how presumptuous for any one to expect to receive hereafter a *farther reward* for these; nay, to expect to receive as *this farther reward* a blessing to which they are confessedly no equivalent.‡

* Read Tim: i. 8—10. in connection with Rom: v. 20.

† *In keeping of them,* (viz. God's statutes or commandments), *there is great reward.* Psalm xix. 11. Here the principle, that *abstinence from the violation of law is its own reward,* is most distinctly recognized.

‡ The whole of the last paragraph in the text may be thus condensed. Human

I now proceed to lay before my readers a few arguments in proof of *the gratuitousness of eternal life*, which are taken avowedly from the scriptures. These arguments I subdivide into *the indirect* and *the direct*.

The arguments which I denominate *indirect*, it will at once be perceived when I come to propose them, are

virtue is merely a *negative*. It consists not, properly speaking, in *doing good*, but in *avoiding evil*.

Virtus est vitium fugere.—Hor.

Just so are the rewards of human virtue *negative* likewise. They consist not, properly speaking, in *benefits bestowed*, but in *penalties avoided*. The same illustrious heathen poet, from whom I have just quoted, has, in the true spirit of his philosophy, couched this maxim in the well known precept:

Hic murus æneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa.

I may observe further, what to the attentive reader of the after part of this treatise will be abundantly manifest, that in the text I have been speaking only of *human virtue*, and *its reward*. Both of these, I understand to have a reference to, and to be limited by, this present world. But there is nothing said in the text about *faith*, or, *the principle of the divine nature*, and *its reward*. *Faith*, as *the present possession of everlasting life*, stands connected with *the kingdom of Christ and of God*—the privileges of *never dying*, and *sitting down with Christ on his throne*, being *its peculiar and appropriate rewards*. On this subject I will not at present say more, nor, indeed, though I were to do so, could I now be understood, seeing that few minds are enlightened enough to apprehend the difference between *soul* and *spirit*—between *the nature of man*, and *the nature of God*. The moment, however, that the distinction between *mere human virtue*, and *faith as the first fruits of the divine nature*—and between *this present world as the field for the exercise and reward of the former*, and *the kingdom of Christ as that for the exercise and reward of the latter*, comes to be apprehended; and also the moment it is understood, that as *violation of natural conscience deprives of the former*, so does *unbelief deprive of the latter*; that moment is it understood likewise, that while the apostle Paul, in the discourse which he delivered at Athens, Acts xvii. 22—31., intended to expose the erroneous notions of the Epicureans and Stoics respecting *a future state*, and, to shew that *there were rewards and punishments connected with that state* of which they had never so much as dreamed, he certainly had no intention to find fault with them for confining *mere human virtue* and *its rewards* to this present life.

derived from analogy. The circumstance of *eternal life being gratuitously bestowed* having been shewn to be agreeable to *the analogy of nature*, it struck me that I should materially strengthen and confirm my reasoning by shewing it to be agreeable likewise to *the analogy of scripture*. Besides, I saw that in this way I should be able to meet and obviate an objection, which it was extremely probable I should have to encounter. "If eternal life be in the strictest sense of the terms *the gift of God*, how happens it, that no traces of the doctrine are discoverable in the manner in which God reveals himself to have acted towards intelligent beings as inhabitants of this present world?" By shewing that God's procedure towards mankind in every age, can only be accounted for on the principle of his dealings with them not being *solely* according to their deserts, and of his tendency to bestow upon them blessings to which they cannot plead even the shadow of a right, I prove that man is even here in a variety of respects the recipient of gratuitous blessings. And, if even in a *conditional* state of things like the present, God heaps undeserved favours on the heads of intelligent beings, how strong the presumption, that when raised to a state in which they shall be more capable of receiving them, God may have other and higher blessings of the same gratuitous nature to bestow.

In seeking for proofs of favours conferred gratuitously upon mankind in this present life, I have no occasion to travel out of the divine record; nor in search of them even there have I occasion to travel far. The accounts

of God's dealings, first, with the Jews, and secondly, with the Gentiles, must be acknowledged to constitute a very large portion of the inspired volume. But in his procedure towards both, is there not a constant exhibition of favours gratuitously bestowed?

1. Is not the whole history of the Jews, from first to last, a series of accounts of the most unprovoked rebellions against the most High on their part, and a series of proofs of long-suffering patience and loving kindness on the part of God? We are expressly informed, that their selection at first to know God's name, and to be the depositories of His truth, was not on the ground of any natural superiority of theirs over the other nations of the earth. So far from this, many other nations, in a variety of respects, surpassed them. *The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, (for ye were the fewest of all people), but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your Fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh King of Egypt.* Deuter. vii. 7, 8. To the complete gratuitousness of the favour thus originally conferred upon the Jewish nation, every part of the divine procedure towards them since has corresponded. By consulting the books of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges, or, if this shall be deemed too great a labour, by casting the eye over the epitome of the early history of the Jews, which stands recorded in the 78th Psalm, it will

be seen, that the conduct of Israel towards the Most High, at the very period when, by conducting them safely through the wilderness, and introducing them triumphantly into the promised land, He was affording them the most signal proofs of the attachment which He bore towards them, was nothing but a series of breaches of the divine law, and relapses into the most provoking obstinacy and rebellion. And did He for this cast them off? No. Although He severely chastised them, from time to time, by the instrumentality of the Philistines and other neighbouring nations, He nevertheless continued his favours to them—defended them against every attempt made by their enemies to exterminate them—*blessed those who blessed them, and cursed those who cursed them.* Surely treatment so beneficent and paternal as this, at length softened their hearts, and rendered them observant of the divine will? By no means. The Jews seem as if they had resolved to exhibit in their own conduct, a practical illustration of the poet's maxim,

Servetur ad imum,
Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.—Hor.

The subsequent portion of their history has been an exact counterpart of that which preceded; consisting of continued and increasing manifestations of loving kindness on the part of God, and of the most marked contempt for these on their part. From the Babylonish captivity the tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned, cured indeed of external idolatry, but in other respects as stiff-necked, untameable, and rebellious as ever. In

process of time, they shewed themselves to be the children of those who had withstood Moses and killed the prophets, by rejecting and crucifying the Lord of Glory. And not satisfied with embruing their hands in the blood of the Son of God, they proceeded, without the slightest remorse or compunction, to shed the blood of his apostles and other faithful followers. The cup of their iniquities was now full. The Romans, commissioned on this occasion to be the executioners of the divine vengeance, assailed and sacked their chief city—destroyed their temple—slew vast numbers of their nation—carried a part of the survivors into captivity—and scattered the rest to the four winds of Heaven. Surely, then, either divine forbearance, or human rebellion, was thoroughly exhausted. So far from this, there has since been no termination either of the one or of the other. The divine purpose, announced in the divine promise, *though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee,* Jeremiah xxx. 11—see Rom. xi. 29, prevented the exhaustion of the divine love; the principles of human nature in general, Rom. viii. 7, and the character of the Jews in particular, Acts vii. *throughout,* prevented any change in the conduct of that singular people. Scattered among all the nations of the earth—*peeled, meted out, and trodden under foot,* Isaiah xviii. 2, 7—the Jews are still, by the divine goodness and forbearance, preserved a separate people; and are still, *for the Father's sakes,* Rom. xi. 28, destined to be the inheritors of spiritual blessings: and yet, although visibly chastened

by the hand of God, they still are, and till the arrival of the period announced in prophecy will be, as inveterate in their hostility to Jesus of Nazareth and his cause as ever. Thus, totally undeserving of divine favours, and yet the constant recipients of them—persevering to the very last in rebellion against the Most High, and yet at the last crowned by Him with mercies greater than any which their Fathers ever enjoyed —say, if a more striking proof of the disposition of our Heavenly Father to bestow favours gratuitously upon the children of men, than the history of the Jews affords, can by any possibility be conceived?

2. Yes, an exhibition, if possible still more striking, of the gratuitous manner in which He confers His favours even in this life, is afforded through the medium of his procedure towards the Gentile world. If to the singular honour of being the depositories of God's word and will in Old Testament times, the Jews previous to their calling could not advance even the shadow of a claim on the score of merit, no more could the Gentiles, previous to its being conferred on them, advance any claim, founded on merit, to the privilege of being introduced into the Church of Christ. And if the Jews, subsequent to their calling, proved themselves to be unworthy of the favours so profusely showered down upon them—equally unworthy of the far superior privileges vouchsafed to them, have the Gentiles, since the commencement of the Christian era, shewn themselves to be. That the Gentiles were totally unworthy of being introduced into the Church of God, every tyro in history

—every student of the sacred volume—is fully aware. The descendants of Noah, instead of bearing in mind the astonishing deliverance of which their fathers had been the subjects at the period of the flood, and the attributes of the divine character thereby strikingly displayed, soon forgot, or rather gave a false colouring to, both the one and the other; and went on, in every succeeding age, departing farther and farther from God —plunging deeper and deeper into idolatry—and combining with their demon, creature, and image worship, the practice of crimes of the most flagitious and abominable description. In the emphatic language of the apostle, in the 1st chapter of the epistle to the Romans, *they did not choose to retain God in their knowledge,* and having *changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,* they preferred *worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.* On this account, God's righteous displeasure was manifested towards them in a variety of ways and on a variety of occasions. As one means of testifying it, *He gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves;* He rendering those very criminal practices in which they indulged, and that moral blindness of which they were necessarily productive, one of their severest chastisements. With this He connected other marked expressions of his wrath, such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—the plagues inflicted on the

Egyptians—the extermination of the nations of Canaan —and those endless cruelties, dreadful oppressions, and bloody wars, with which the heathen nations were continually tormenting one another. The idolatry and horrid profligacy of the Gentile world, instead of being restrained or diminished by length of time, the progress of civilization, or the light of science, went on continually increasing;* nay, there never was a period when, notwithstanding all the boasted refinement of the Greeks and Romans, God was less known, or man more depraved, than that when the Messiah made his appearance in the flesh. To the other crimes already perpetrated by them, the Gentiles now added that of co-operating with the Jews in opposing and crucifying the Son of God, and throwing every obstacle in the way of the preaching of his gospel. Yet to men thus utterly unworthy of the divine regard was *the word of Salvation* sent; upon men thus utterly depraved were the privileges of *the kingdom of God* conferred. Romans i. 18 - 32. 1 Corinth. vi. 9 - 11. 1 Thessal. i. 9. Nor does the parallel between the case of Jews and Gentiles terminate here. The Gentiles, since their introduction into the church of God, have shewn that they are as completely undeserving of the privileges conceded to them, and as thoroughly incapable of deriving lessons from experience, as the descendants of Abraham themselves. What do the annals of that portion of the Gentile world to which Christ has been preached offer to us during the long period of eighteen centuries, but a repetition, upon

* See Leland on the Necessity of Revelation.

a somewhat larger scale, of the same evils for which God so severely chastised his antient people, combined with a repetition of similar displays of the divine displeasure and the divine forbearance? God's word in modern times made void by creeds and confessions, as daringly as of old it was made void by *the traditions of the Elders*—idols of one kind or another substituted for the Lord Jesus the only legitimate object of worship—a confidence reposed in man in matters of religion, which is due only to the great head of the church himself—open and undisguised rebellion against the authority of the King of Zion—the persecution, sometimes even to death, of those who have ventured to prefer listening to God rather than man—and though last, not least, the fact that *reformations of Religion*, as they are called, while they have cut off some of the grosser forms of opposition to God, have left the root of opposition to Him as rank, as vigorous, as prolific in error as ever—shew that, *mutatis mutandis*, the history of the Gentile church, is little else than a second edition of that of the Jewish church of old. Still however although God has visited, and will continue to visit with deserved vengeance the practices of the Gentile church, until He shall have utterly destroyed *the mother of harlots and her filthy brood*, his forbearance towards that church hitherto has been, and the favours conferred upon its members by Him afterwards we know from prophecy will be, as undeserved and astonishing, as has been, and will be His procedure towards His antient people. As while He punished the Jews by destroying their temple, and bringing the dispensation of Moses to an end,

He did so with the intention of afterwards bestowing upon them blessings greater than those which either they or their fathers had enjoyed; so while He punishes the Gentiles by destroying the objects of their idolatry, and bringing the existing state of their church to an end, He will do so for the purpose of exalting its members to a dignity, and crowning them with a glory, such as none of them can at the present moment form any adequate conception of. Man's delinquency, although thus justly and severely punished, nevertheless being, as regards both Jews and Gentiles, followed by the enjoyment on the part of both of blessings of the most astonishing kind gratuitously conferred upon them even in time; what can be conceived to furnish us with a stronger reason for arguing from analogy, that deserved punishment inflicted upon man *here*, will be followed by the blessing of everlasting life bestowed upon him gratuitously *hereafter*?

But leaving the arguments just insisted on, and others of a similar kind, to have their due weight with the reflecting, I proceed to lay before my readers some *direct* arguments in favour of the gratuitousness of eternal life, with which the scriptures supply us. These may be thus stated.

1st. It being certain that mankind die in consequence of having deserved to lose their present inferior existence, how impossible for them on the footing of merit to possess any claim to an existence which is superior.

2dly. Supposing eternal life to be conditionally bestowed, as every condition of its enjoyment is already fulfilled, it comes, as a matter of necessity, unconditionally or gratuitously to us.

But, 3dly, the argument which puts beyond the possibility of doubt or cavil the gratuitous nature of everlasting life, is the fact of its conditions having been fulfilled by the same Being by whom they were prescribed; it following necessarily from this, that conditions of everlasting life are, properly speaking, merely means of divine manifestation.

1. As mankind die in consequence of having deserved to part with their present *inferior* existence, it is impossible for them on the footing of merit to possess any claim to an existence which is *superior*. This is merely a specimen of what is denominated by logicians the argument *a fortiori*. It is level to the apprehension of every man who is capable of understanding, that he who deserves not even a recompense of *an inferior kind*, can much less deserve one *which is superior*—or, to avail myself of a familiar example, that he to whom I do not owe *even a single farthing*, can much less have claims upon me for *sums of countless magnitude*. The man who has no right to live for ever *here*, can much less have any right to live for evermore *hereafter*. Of course, the whole value and conclusiveness of this argument depend on the truth of the minor proposition, that *man deserves not to retain the life which now is*. But is there any one daring enough to controvert it? Even,

abstractly considered, is it not sufficiently proved by the fact of the whole human race dying? For, admitting that *God is just in all his ways*, on what ground, except on that of mankind having forfeited their present life, could He have deprived them of it? Nay, putting the justice of God out of the question, does not a moment's reflection teach us, that if we admit man to be *sinful* or *capable of violating the dictates of conscience*, we must also admit him to be *short lived* or *capable of dying;* upon the obvious principle, that *imperfection of any one kind*, necessarily implying and accompanying *imperfection of every other*, a being who is *imperfect in his capacity of obedience*, must be *imperfect likewise in his capacity of duration.* But it is quite unnecessary to have recourse to *a priori* reasoning about the matter, for the inspired writers themselves have settled it. Their unanimous and unequivocal testimony is, that it is as transgressors of God's law men die; or, to use their own expressive phraseology, that *death is sin's wages.* This, indeed, may almost be denominated the fundamental doctrine of the sacred volume; nay, it is so closely interwoven with every part of it, that any attempt to separate the one from the other would necessarily be attended with the destruction of both. The mode, too, in which the doctrine of *death being sin's desert* is inculcated, is exceedingly remarkable. It is brought out, not so much *abstractly*, as *through the medium of facts;* and these so stated, arranged, and obtruded on our notice, as to constitute a series or gradation of evidences of its truth, of which

each succeeding one rises in intensity above that which precedes. First of all, the misconduct and consequent condemnation of the progenitors of the human race, who, although placed in external circumstances the most favourable, and allowed the greatest range and latitude of enjoyment, nevertheless chose to violate a prohibition by which scarcely any restraint whatever had been imposed on them, is employed as a general illustration of the principle, that human beings are unworthy of retaining this present life. Secondly, the fate of the antidiluvian world, and the abridgement of human life consequent on that awful catastrophe, serve to deepen and strengthen the impression produced by the results of the transgression of our first parents; for they shew us, that so far from man deserving to live for ever upon earth, he is unworthy even of having his life protracted to the limits which were originally assigned to it. And in the third place, the fact that since the period of the flood, at least one half of the human race have been cut off in infancy —that of the remainder, a large portion have died without reaching manhood—and that but very few have been privileged to see *three-score and ten, or four-score years* —shew it to be *of the tender mercies of the Lord* that all are not consumed in the earlier stages of existence; and consequently give to man's unworthiness of the life that now is, the strongest evidence* of which it is susceptible. In this way, then, is the ground-work of the present argument laid, in the fact that man's ceasing

* *Strongest natural evidence*, I mean, for the death of the Son of God, *a supernatural event*, affords evidence *still stronger*.

to retain his present life is judicial, or that it is the result of his having deserved to lose it. This point once settled, with what irresistible force and cogency has the apostle Paul stated the argument itself, in the three first chapters of his epistle to the Romans. After having—by a process of induction the most perfect that can be imagined—collected, condensed, and concentrated, the mass of materials which lie scattered throughout the pages of the Old Testament scriptures—after having shewn that God, in declaring human beings to be guilty in his sight and condemning them accordingly, is not merely acting consistently with the strictest rules of equity, but also carrying along with Him the convictions and ratifying the decisions of men's own minds—and after having thus brought the charge of guilt home to every individual's own conscience—how admirably does he draw the conclusion, that if from a law violated by *all*, and therefore pronouncing sentence of condemnation upon *all*, it is impossible for *any* to derive hope of having continued to them even the life that now is; *much less* can such persons thence derive hope of having conferred upon them the possession and enjoyment of life everlasting, *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* From which, he concludes, still farther, the necessity of our *being justified* FREELY BY GRACE, *through*

the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Rom. iii. 19. 20—24. How strong, how irresistibly strong, in favour of everlasting life being gratuitously bestowed, the argument upon which I am at present insisting, the more it is probed and examined into. Some men calling themselves Christians, nay some even who have assumed to rank among the followers of Calvin, have pretended to hold, that had Adam continued obedient to the divine command originally prescribed to him, he would in process of time have risen, or rather would have raised himself, to the enjoyment of a higher state of existence! How miserably ignorant of scripture, and inferior in the views entertained by them to many of the heathen philosophers, do such theologians manifest themselves to be. How ignorant of scripture—seeing that it is the import of their views to represent *the first man who was of the earth earthy* as capable, in the event of his continued obedience, of having effected that, which God himself has shewn could only be effected by *the second man the Lord from Heaven.* How inferior to many of the heathen philosophers—for they understanding and holding that *virtue is its own reward,* and that *the object of law is not properly speaking to reward, but to restrain from transgression by threats of punishment,* laid down principles, which, had they enjoyed the opportunity of following them out by being made acquainted with the word of God, must have led them to the conclusion, that although Adam's disobedience necessarily and properly cost him his life, *his continued obedience could by no possibility have been*



attended with any other result or reward, than merely the continuance to him of the life originally conferred upon him. That the philosophers in question were correct both in these principles, and in the conclusion which, under the assumed circumstances, they must have drawn from them, may be easily shewn. Suppose that Adam, by abstaining from the violation of the divine command, might have deserved a higher state of existence; and, besides the absurdity of representing law, in opposition to its very nature, to be a means of *positively* rewarding, you immediately render the scheme of salvation through Christ *remedial,* or *a scheme of restoration*; that is, you represent Christ as having come into the world merely to bring back matters to the state in which they were previous to the fall; thereby destroying that grand and distinguishing feature of the gospel, viz., its exhibiting God as conferring freely through his Son, not a life such as Adam and his posterity might by continued obedience have retained, and which by transgression they have forfeited, but a life which as both heavenly and everlasting is infinitely superior to it, and of which, except through the Son of God, mankind could not have become partakers. But as I have treated of this subject at considerable length in the first part of my treatise entitled "Three Questions proposed and answered," &c., I will not enlarge upon it here. Suffice it to observe, that the understanding of the principle of its being impossible for man, by his utmost and longest protracted obedience, to have deserved a state of existence higher than the present, combined with the fact

of his having forfeited even this present state of existence, renders the conclusion as to the necessity of eternal life being gratuitously conferred, one of the strongest specimens of *a fortiori* reasoning that can well be imagined. If we who by all our obedience could not have deserved a life higher than that which we now possess, have by our disobedience deserved to lose even it, how inexpressibly absurd for us to anticipate receiving a life superior to the present on any other footing than as a gift. Surely no one who agrees with the apostle in his minor proposition, that *man deserves to lose the life that now is,* can help agreeing with him likewise in his conclusion that *man cannot deserve everlasting life;* or, to adopt his own inimitable phraseology, every one who admits that *death is sin's wages,* must admit likewise that *everlasting life* can only be enjoyed by us as *God's gift.*

2. The second direct argument employed by the inspired writers to prove the gratuitousness of eternal life, is, that even on the supposition of the benefit being bestowed *conditionally,* all the *conditions* on which we become partakers of it are already fulfilled. This argument, from its wonderful adaptation to the human mind, is a favourite one with the sacred writers. It is constantly insisted on, as well in *the old,* as in *the new Testament scriptures.* In *the former,* we find *the conditions* of everlasting life stated—in *the latter,* we are informed that *these conditions* have been fulfilled. To this I add, that, as was remarked concerning the argument last considered, so I may remark concerning this, it is not

so much brought out *abstractly*, as *through the medium of a series of plain and intelligible facts*. Let me endeavour to place this argument, which, the moment it is understood, at once and necessarily speaks peace to the conscience, before my readers in as succinct, and yet in as perspicuous a manner as possible. It being acknowleged, because it has been demonstrated from scripture, that as human beings do not *deserve* to retain the life which now is, they can much less *deserve* to become partakers of life everlasting, the questions nevertheless may occur—supposing eternal life to be *conditionally* bestowed, what are *the conditions* by the fulfilment of which mankind can attain to the possession of this unspeakably glorious privilege? and, how are *these conditions* fulfilled?—First. As to *the conditions* themselves, the Old Testament scriptures supply us with information the most ample. In order to avoid prolixity, (for were every *condition* stated and illustrated I might fill the volume with nothing else), let me confine the reader's attention to two of these only. The one, that a man of pure, spotless, and perfectly righteous character, should make his appearance. *Lord*, says the Psalmist, *who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy Holy Hill?* To which the answer is returned, *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, &c.* Psalm xv. 1, 2, &c. Again, inquires the same inspired writer, *who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His Holy Place?* The answer is precisely similar to that which is given in the former case. *He that hath clean hands,*

and a pure heart; &c. Psalm xxiv. 3, 4, &c. And in strict conformity with the question and answer, when a person possessed of and exhibiting this perfectly righteous character is, in a subsequent part of the Psalm, represented as making his appearance, the everlasting gates are immediately thrown open to him, and the heavenly hosts welcome his approach. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.* Verse 7. &c. From the passages quoted, and others of similar import, it appears, that, until a perfectly righteous man should arise, the gates of the celestial city were to be kept closed against Adam's descendants. The other *condition* of our enjoying everlasting life—dwelt on by the Old Testament writers—to which I allude, is, that the pure, spotless, and perfectly righteous man, whose future advent they foretel, should be *essentially one* with the children of men. Not *one,* as ordinary human beings are one with each other, by possessing merely the same nature; but *one* in such a sense as that it should be impossible to effect a disjunction between him and them. Such *an essential union* with each other, as that the righteousness and life of *one,* should be the righteousness, and life of *all,* ordinary human beings do not possess; and yet, without such *an essential union* between the perfectly righteous man, and other human beings, as that his righteousness and life, should be their righteousness and life likewise, it would have been impossible for him, by his perfectly righteous character, to have benefited more than himself personally. Now, there

is but one conceivable way in which this *essential union* could exist, and that is, that the perfectly righteous man in question, should be God as well as man; for, concerning none but Him *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*, can it be said, that He is necessarily, inseparably, essentially, *one with us*. On this ground it is that the Old Testament writers, while they speak of the future perfectly righteous character, as *the seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent*—as *the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed*—and as *both the offspring of David, and the inheritor of his kingdom;* also speak of him as, *the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*. According to them, he was not merely to be a man, who should surpass all the other children of men, in being invested with *an everlasting Priesthood*, Psalm cx. 4., and in being elevated to *a Kingdom whereof there should be no end*, 2 Samuel vii. 13., Psalm lxxxix. 29—but he was to be also *the Son of God*, Psalm ii. 7, nay, *God himself*, Psalm xlv. 6, Isaiah xl. 3, 10, 11—these latter facts both affording the explanation of the perfect character which he was to display, and being the source of good hope to us the guilty children of men. How important, and how well deserving to be meditated on, these two grand *conditions* of eternal life, so much insisted on by the Old Testament writers. Had not the man prophesied of by them been *perfectly righteous*, what claim could he have had even *personally* on his Heavenly Father? And had he not, by the very necessity of his nature, been

one with us, of what use or avail could his *personal righteousness* have been *to us?*—And now comes the second question, has there been a fulfilment of those *conditions* which the Old Testament scriptures speak of as indispensable to our enjoyment of everlasting life? To this the New Testament writers answer with one accord, they have. A perfectly righteous character has been manifested in the flesh. Need I observe, that it is of Jesus of Nazareth—of him who *was despised and rejected of men*—I am now speaking. Concerning him and concerning him only is it testified, that he was *holy,** *harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*, Heb. vii. 26., and that he *did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* 1 Peter ii. 22. And is not this the very character of the Being whose future advent the Old Testament scriptures foretold, and upon whom, speaking *conditionally*, the hopes of man were by them made to depend? Is not this the very character of the Being who was to enter into heaven in his own right?† But the writers of the New, are no more accustomed than those of the Old Testament scriptures, to deal in generals. The evangelists and apostles, especially the former, have furnished us with the details of the history of *this perfect character*, and have enabled us thereby to understand and judge for ourselves. They have exhibited him born of a virgin, and, as thus deriving his body and mind directly from God, necessarily pure, spotless, and

* ὅσιος *gracious* or *merciful.* See Dr. Campbell of Aberdeen's Preliminary Dissertations. Diss. VI, part 4.

† See Psalms i. xv, and xxiv, *throughout*, as well as numerous other passages of the Old Testament which it would be tedious to enumerate.

holy, from his very origin. They have exhibited him, after entering on his public ministry, assailed by every species of temptation, and yet overcome by none. They have exhibited him surrounded by open or disguised enemies, and timorous friends; and yet, forgiving, weeping over, and praying for the one, while he sympathises with, strengthens, and supports the other. He appears instructing the ignorant—comforting the mourners—supplying the wants of the destitute—going about continually doing good—hating sin, and yet the friend of the sinner. But all this, although necessary to the perfection of his character *as a human being*, and clearly entitling him to *the continuance of his life upon earth*, could not, upon principles already laid down, have entitled him *to everlasting life in a higher state of existence.* Law not having for its object, properly speaking, *to reward*, or, if the phrase be better liked, *the only reward which law can bestow being, that where it is not violated it has no punishments to inflict*, the Lord Jesus, by all his obedience to law upon earth, could have attained to no other and no higher reward, than that of *rendering it impossible to take away his earthly existence from him.* John x. 18.* Keeping the law of God in all its

* May not this circumstance be alluded to in the very language in which, by some of the Evangelists, the death of the Messiah is related? Admitting that a certain degree of ambiguity attaches to the phrase εξεπνευσε employed by Mark and Luke, can we overlook the way in which Matthew and John have described that stupendous event? According to the former, αφῆκε το πνευμα, *he dismissed or resigned his spirit;* according the latter παρεδωκε το πνευμα, *he delivered or yielded up his spirit.* How striking in both cases the phraseology. Compare Christ's words, Luke xxiii, 46, with Psalm

parts, he might have set its punishments at defiance. But here comes out a most wonderful fact. The essence of law or perfect righteousness being love, Mat. xxii. 37—40. Rom. xiii. 8—10, and love being in the Messiah's heart or constituting the very essence of his mind, Psalm xl. 8, that divine personage could not have exhibited *the perfection of righteousness*, without exhibiting *the perfection of love*.* But how could he have exhibited perfect love, except by parting with his earthly life? For how, except by parting with that life, could he have rendered any service to his fellow men? The continued obedience of the Lord Jesus would, as a matter of course, have exempted himself personally from the stroke of death; but as other human beings had justly become obnoxious to the power of the gloomy tyrant, how, upon the supposition of his wish and determination to preserve the truth of God inviolate, could his personal obedience and life have been productive of any good to them? He might, it is true, by an arbitrary act, have tried to reverse the divine sentence, and stay the execution of the divine threatening denounced against Adam and his posterity; but would it have been consistent with the

46, with Psalm xxxi, 5. The learned reader, either from the stores of classic literature, or, by consulting Schleusner, may be able to supply himself with *formulæ* or modes of expression similar to those above noted; but he will find it difficult to convince the child of God, that a very particular divine providence did not guide the inspired penmen in their choice of the above remarkable phrases.

* The perfect righteousness of Christ's character in laying down his earthly life is seen in this likewise, that, in so doing, he complied with *the commandment which he had received of his Father*. John x, 18. Philip. ii, 8. Thus it is that, in parting with his life upon earth, he exhibited *the perfection of righteousness*, viewed in the light of *the perfection of obedience*.



acter of him who proclaimed himself to be *the truth*, who declared that *those who had seen him had seen Father*, to have attempted the performance of that, :h, could he have accomplished it, would have made . a liar? Certainly not. The Lord Jesus, in the ıt of his having resolved to retain his life upon earth, t have been contented to see the successive genera- ; of the children of men pass away and drop into the 'e around him, without the possibility of benefiting ı by his own deathless existence. Such a course rocedure, could he have adopted it, instead of exhi- ıg in him *the perfection of love*, would have been an bition on his part of *the perfection of selfishness*. ı, however, could not be; and therefore the Lord ıs as the *perfectly righteous*, that is, the *perfectly ıg man*, voluntarily laid down the life which he assumed in common with us here; a life which, ıcapable of transgressing personally, he might, in ; of every effort to deprive him of it, have retained ı earth for ever. But how could his parting with earthly life benefit us? To this question the ver which falls to be returned is, that it could do ınly, on the supposition, in the first place, of his h being followed by his rising again to the possession life which we had not forfeited; and, in the second e, of our being privileged to share with him in possession and enjoyment of that unforfeited tence. Now, what for the sake of being under- d, I here state as *conditions* of the death of Jesus :fiting us, are in the New Testament scriptures, set

down as so many *facts*. In the first place, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, on the third day, to the power of an endless life. Not to a life such as that which he had previously possessed in common with us upon earth, but to the perfection of life, at his Father's right hand, and in his Father's immediate presence for ever-more. This was strictly consistent with the principle that law has no *positive* rewards to bestow. Continuing to fulfil God's law upon earth, he had the continuance of his earthly existence for his sole reward. But fulfilling the law of God to the extent of parting with his earthly existence, at once a new, or rather, perhaps, an additional set of principles, force themselves on our notice.—1st. The *perfection* of Christ's righteousness consisted not, as we have just seen, in his continued obedience upon earth, but in his parting with his earthly life. But, absolute perfection of character in any one respect, necessarily stands connected with absolute perfection of character in every other. Hence, he who shewed himself to be possessed of *perfect righteousness* by parting with his earthly life, behoved to appear possessed of *perfect life* likewise. A principle which we are warranted in extending to the necessity of his having possessed *perfect power, perfect wisdom, perfect truth*, &c. 2dly. Although *law* has no other reward to bestow, than simply exempting those who comply with its dictates from punishment, it is nevertheless of the very essence of *love* to bestow blessings, to which no exact right or title can be pleaded. This being understood, it appears that although the Lord Jesus, so long

as he obeyed upon earth had to do only with *law*, and had exemption from punishment for his reward; yet the moment that he parted with his earthly life, came to have to do with the principle of *love*, and had for his reward the joys of a higher state of existence promised him by his Heavenly Father. 3dly. None could have possessed either the right or the power to dispose of his earthly life, except *the author of life* himself, Acts iii, 15. This, however, being admitted—and who can dispute it?—we must admit, likewise, that the Lord Jesus had two lives; one as man's equal, and one as man's superior; one which he could, and one which, as essential to him, he could not sacrifice; Luke xxiii, 43. Nay, farther, that in dying, he continued to live; and that, as essentially *the living one*, Rev. i, 18, he had the power of swallowing up in, and assimilating to his higher, heavenly, and everlasting existence, the existence capable of dying which for a time he had assumed. Thus do we, from these three principles, of *perfect righteousness* standing necessarily connected with *perfect life*—of *love* as the source of *positive*, in opposition to *law* as the source of merely *negative* rewards—and of a *superior*, as necessarily swallowing up in and conforming to itself an *inferior* state of existence—infer the necessity of the death of the Lord Jesus, as an expression of *perfect righteousness*, *perfect love*, and *perfect power*, standing connected with the possession on his part of *perfect* or *everlasting life*; or, in the emphatic language of the apostle Peter, we perceive *God to have raised Christ up, having loosed*

the pains of death; because, from his nature as the perfect one, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE *that he should be holden of it.* Acts ii. 24. But as the endless life to the possession of which Jesus rose from the dead, is a life which we have not forfeited, this leads me to remark, in the second place, that the endless life thus possessed by Jesus, he can, without in the slightest degree interfering with *the truth* of God, share with us. At this point, the necessity and importance of the supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus begin to make their appearance. How, unless God as well as man, could we have been essentially one with him? And how, unless essentially one with him, could his righteousness and life have necessarily been ours? As *bone of our bone* and *flesh of our flesh,* having tasted of suffering and been exposed to temptation, Jesus was no doubt qualified experimentally to sympathize with us under our trials. Nay, it was in him as possessed of flesh, that God exhibited human nature for once perfect, and provided himself with *a spotless lamb for a sin offering.* But regarded *merely* as a human being, of what avail could either the life or death of Jesus have been to us? My life is not necessarily another man's life, nor is my death necessarily another man's death; no more than his life or death necessarily infers mine. But understand Jesus to be God as well as man, and immediately a source of perfect, unchanging, infallible hope, is opened up to the mind. For, although as human beings we are transgressors, and as such are doomed to die; yet if one by necessity of

nature with a Being who lives for evermore, it inevitably follows, that *because he lives, we shall live also;* John xiv. 19. Now what is this but the very ground of hope which the gospel proposes? Jesus, so far from interfering with the execution of the sentence of death which we by transgression have incurred, on the contrary allows it to take full effect upon us. He is resolved that the truth of God shall be as thoroughly vindicated in the fulfilment of its threatenings, as it is in the performance of its promises. But having submitted to death himself—and having risen from the dead to the possession of life everlasting—and having swallowed up death in himself—and, as he that lives for evermore, being essentially one with us—we necessarily rise with him, and share with him in his present, glorious, and heavenly existence. Observe, that his present existence at God's right hand, is one which we neither have forfeited nor can forfeit; and, therefore, on the supposition of our previously dying, he can give us to partake of his present life, without in any way whatever interfering with or infringing on the truth of God. Jesus being thus by necessity of nature *one with us*, and we being *one with him*, it is an absolute impossibility that *his* resurrection from the dead and possession of life everlasting, should be unattended with *ours*. How admirably has the apostle Paul stated and illustrated this point in the 15th chapter of his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, especially from the 12th to the end of the 22d verses. The *conditions* of our possessing everlasting life—if *conditions* must be

supposed—being thus already so completely fulfilled by the Son of God, how evident that of necessity the blessing comes to us as a *matter of gift*.*

3. As He by whom the conditions of everlasting life have been fulfilled, is the Being by whom they were prescribed, it is thereby clearly intimated to us, that there are in reality no *conditions* of everlasting life at all. As the first argument led to the second, so does the second, by an easy and obvious transition, lead to the third. By discovering that man could not fulfil the conditions of *retaining the life which now is*, much less of *acquiring that which is to come*, we were led to him

* Every spiritually-enlightened mind must at once perceive, that Christ's *external* union with us *as possessed of flesh*, is the type or emblem of his *internal* union with us *as God*. But what is God? Of God, although *negatively* we are aware that He is a Being *destitute of all imperfection*, yet *positively* we are incapable of forming any other idea than that He is *a perfect man*, or, than *as he is manifested in Jesus Christ*. John xiv. 9.—Coloss. i. 15.—Heb. i. 3.—1 John iii. 2. But, although from conceiving of Him as *a perfect man*, we derive the only *ideas* which in our present time state we are capable of acquiring as to His character, do not *the very perfections* which we ascribe to him necessarily lead us to such *conclusions* as the following? As possessed of *perfect life*, He must have existed previous to his appearance in the flesh, John i. 1. 2.—iii. 13.—xvii. 5.—as possessed of *perfect power*, He must have been man's Creator, as well as man's descendant, John i. 3. &c.—Coloss. i. 16.—*the root* as well as *the offspring of David*, Rev. xxii. 16.—and as possessed of *perfect love*, he must be *the source* as well as *the object* of man's affection. 1 John iv. 10, 19, &c. But are not these, and such as these, the *very*, nay the *only ideas*, which attach to what we mean to express by the abstract term GOD?—Speaking of *perfect love*, how delightful is it to observe, that Christ cherishes towards us not one kind of affection merely, but the combined affections of Father, Brother, and Husband. Of Father, as our Creator—of Brother, as having borne our nature—and of Husband, as having exhibited himself united to us in the bonds of an everlasting and indissoluble marriage covenant. The reader will find this subject pleasingly and scripturally illustrated in Relly's *Union: or a treatise of the consanguinity and affinity between Christ and his Church*.

ɔm *the conditions of both* have been completely and ısly accomplished—just so, by discovering that he ɔm the conditions of everlasting life have been d is the same Being by whom they were pre-l, we are enabled to see that the whole is a scheme has for its object to shew us, in such a way as we mprehend, the complete *unconditionality* or *gra-ness* of the blessing. It is in *the not understanding understanding* of this last-named fact, that the nce between *the natural* and *the spiritually en-ed mind* mainly appears. According to the for-eternal life must depend on conditions to be ned by the creature, and unless the conditions formed, eternal life cannot be enjoyed. Accord-the latter, eternal life, as the life of the Creator f, exists in Him essentially, uncausedly, and un-onally; and is by Him communicated to his in-nt creatures, upon a plan which he Himself has l, and by a series of means all of which he Him-rries into effect. That on the supposition of ons of everlasting life existing, the Creator him-anifested in the flesh fulfilled every one of these ons, has, I conceive, already been sufficiently . And yet, that no charge of a disposition to er this all-important fact may be brought against t me again briefly advert to what has been in regard to it. That not man but God was the : of every condition upon which everlasting life any possibility be conceived to depend, may be r considering that a Being possessed of *perfect*

righteousness, as Jesus was, must, by the nature and necessity of things, have been possessed also of *perfect life, perfect power, perfect truth, perfect wisdom*, and so on. But who is possessed of these perfections except the Supreme Being himself, that is, He by whom the law in all its varied forms has been prescribed to man? And yet, even this plain, forcible, and conclusive mode of arguing from *the perfect character* of the Messiah, to his *supreme divinity*, is not required. That the perfect man Christ Jesus, was the Creator himself clothed with flesh, and that, consequently, the law's fulfiller, was the law's prescriber, is expressly asserted in so many passages of scripture, that, in the case of the candid and reflecting, the matter must be put beyond the reach of doubt. John i. 3, *compared with* 14, Colloss. i. 16, and Heb. xii. 24—27, I may mention as a small specimen of the class of texts referred to. But what does the fulfilment of the conditions of life everlasting by God himself demonstrate? That there are in reality conditions of everlasting life to be performed by man? He who can hazard such an assertion or cherish such an idea must be totally ignorant of the import of the facts and declarations recorded in the sacred volume. Nothing, in ordinary life, is understood to afford a more decided proof of the incapacity of an individual, than his continually failing in some particular department, in which, had he possessed the requisite ability, he must, in one way or another, have displayed it. Judging upon this plain, common sense principle, what can be conceived better calculated

to afford proofs of man's inability to fulfil conditions of everlasting life, and thereby of there being no such conditions, than the circumstance of man having had innumerable opportunities of obeying law, and yet having uniformly failed in doing so? Man has never yet been able thoroughly to obey law, whatever may have been its nature—at whatever time it may have been enacted—and with whatever motives it may have been accompanied. He could not refrain from breaking even the most trifling of all prohibitions, and that too when possessed of his earthly nature pure from the hands of God. He could not keep external ordinances when a member of a nation selected by God from among the other nations of the earth, invested with peculiar privileges, and promised conditionally a continuance of the divine favour. He cannot keep law considered as demanding purity of heart as well as life, even when placed externally in more advantageous circumstances, and possessed of higher privileges, than the children of Israel in their most palmy state ever were. But not only is man's inability to fulfil conditions of everlasting life proved *negatively* by his having uniformly failed in obedience to law under whatever form it may have been proposed to him—it is also proved *positively* by the fact of these conditions having been fulfilled by God himself appearing clothed with flesh or human nature. For, what God himself required to fulfil, must, if facts are calculated to convey any information, have been something which man could not fulfil; nay, which it was never intended that man should

fulfil. Rom. viii. 3, 4. A conclusion in which we are confirmed by considering what scripture has declared concerning the character of the Creator, and the relation in which the creature necessarily stands to Him. The character of the Creator is emphatically declared by the apostle Paul to be that of one *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things,* Rom. xi. 36; from which it necessarily follows, that the relation in which the creature stands to Him is one of complete and absolute dependence. But such a state of dependence is perfectly inconsistent with the idea of eternal life being *conditionally bestowed,* that is, of the possibility of any actions *meritorious* of eternal life being performed by the creature. For, in the first place, in order to any intelligent being deserving a reward at the hands of another, or, conferring an obligation upon another, the person obliging must, in some one particular way, be independent of the person obliged, and must confer the favour solely as the result of his own good pleasure—it being obvious, that in so far as one intelligent being can prefer any claim of right to the attentions and services of another, desert on the part of him by whom the attentions and services are rendered is necessarily out of the question. This being the case—and who can deny that it is so?—by what possibility can the creature deserve any favour at the hands of the Creator? Man cannot pretend to be in any one respect independent of God, for the entire dependence of the former upon the latter results from the very constitution of created being. Under such circumstances the very element of desert,

our being able of ourselves, and independently of t others are entitled to, to render services to them, ng no place in the relation in which man stands od, how clear is it, that as nothing meritorious can erformed by the former, so neither can any obliga- derived from desert be fastened upon the latter. mode of reasoning has obtained the sanction of the ired apostle, and has been embodied by him in the hatic query, *Who hath first given to God, and it be recompensed unto him again?* Rom. xi. 35. ıe second place, as from the entire dependence of reature upon the Creator, it follows, that in all his ghts and actions the former must be fulfilling the and purposes of the latter, so, from these premises n along with their conclusion, we gather that all *itionality* or *meritoriousness of eternal life* on the part e creature is necessarily out of the question. Ever I was capable of understanding the relation of en- lependence in which man stands to God, the idea of *former* possessing a will in any respect whatever or *independent* of the will of *the latter*, has appeared e to be the very acmé of absurdity. It is true, having been long puzzled with difficulties, partly ent in the nature of the subject, partly the result man folly, it was long before I could see my way ly through them. But God was pleased at last to ve every difficulty by leading me to a careful al of the 9th and 11th chapters of the Epistle to the ans, and by giving me to understand thereby the dif- ce between the mind of man in its *natural* and the

same mind in its *spiritual state.* The moment I perceived that, although in every state of existence the intelligent creature must, like every thing else, *be fulfilling exactly the will of the Creator,* there is nevertheless on the part of the mind in its natural state *no intention to fulfil God's will,* but merely *an intention to fulfil its own will;* and that in the mind rendered spiritual, and in it only, there exists not merely *a fulfilment of the divine will,* but likewise *an intention to fulfil it,* Psalm xl. 7, 8., Luke xxii. 42., Hebrew x. 7, 9;—the divine will being, *self manifestation* or *the promotion of the divine glory,* Rom. xi. 36. John xiv, 8—10., xvii. 1—10., 2 Corinth. iv. 6; and *an intention to fulfil the divine will* being, *an intention to make God known* or *to promote the divine glory,* 1 Corinth. x. 31,—I say, the moment I perceived this, every difficulty vanished; *the essence of evil* as implying ignorance of God and as consisting in *selfishness* or *living to self,* and *the essence of good* as implying knowledge of God and as consisting in *generosity* or *living to God—from love to him as having first loved us;* the fact, that in the *not having* or *having,* for the motive of our conduct, *a sameness of purpose with the purpose of God himself,* consisted the difference between *the natural* and *the spiritual mind;* and a number of kindred topics, immediately stood out in all their native lustre and evidence before me. Man thus, from that entire dependence upon God which is essential to his nature, fulfilling in all respects the will of God, by what possibility can his actions be meritorious? Could man's will be conceived of as distinct from and

independent of the will of God, then I grant that man might be conceived of as able to deserve favours at God's hands. But when it is considered that there never yet sprang up a thought in man's bosom which God himself did not implant there—and that instead of man being able to originate what is good, all that in him deserves the name is there in consequence of divine arrangement and divine power—how absurd to suppose, that,—because we find Him who gives to his intelligent creatures what is good in any one respect, choosing with a view to the perfection of his gifts to accompany the blessing with blessings corresponding to it and consistent with it,—we are therefore warranted in dividing into parts what in reality is one grand and indivisible whole, and after representing the creature as having performed one part himself, to represent him as receiving the other parts from the Creator, in reward of his meritorious conduct! No spiritually enlightened mind will thus think or judge. The Christian, so far from supposing that the creature either is or can be, in any point of view, the originator or performer of what is good, sees and acknowledges that whatever in the creature is good, whether in principle or practice, derives its existence solely and exclusively from the will and almighty power of the Creator. James i. 17, 18. He sees and acknowledges that in yielding obedience to God, we are not merely rendering to him that to which he is already entitled—that which is already his own—but, that as his creatures it is in consequence of God himself directly *working in us both to will and to do of his*

good pleasure, that the obedience in question is yielded by us. By what possibility, then, I again inquire, can we, under such circumstances, lay the Creator under an obligation to us? He is Himself, by His mighty power working in us, the source—author—performer of all our actions and services;—and how then can we, who are thus mere passive instruments in *His* hands,—mere *clay in the hands of Him the potter*, Rom. ix. 21,—turn upon Him, and, assuming the attitude and language of independent beings, pretend to treat and address Him as if He were an instrument in *our* hands and subservient to *our* purposes? It is true, that He may bring, nay, it is the ground of our rejoicing as believers that, of His own free will and sovereign good pleasure, He actually has brought *Himself* under obligations to us—but how different this from the idea cherished by an unbelieving world of *our* being able to impose obligations on *Him*. O how absurd, not to say criminal, the doctrines of *free will* and *human merit!* *The creature* who, *as such*, must in every point of view be dependent on *the Creator*, pretending to possess a will *free*, that is, *independent of* his almighty superior! *The creature* who, *as such*, can present nothing to *the Creator* which does not already belong to Him, nay, who in presenting his services is acting under the immediate power and influence of *the Creator*, venturing to prefer a claim to reward, as if he were *an independent being* conferring an obligation upon *one who was his equal!* One would be inclined to think that the mere statement of such doctrines—that the mere fact of reducing them to plain and intel-

ligible propositions—would of itself be sufficient to expose them in all their naked deformity, and draw towards them the scorn and disgust of every thinking mind. Let it not, however, be supposed that I am determined, at all hazards, to impute to another, sentiments which, if an opportunity for explanation were afforded, he himself would disavow. No; while constrained by a sense of duty to contend earnestly for what I believe to be true, and resolved as far as in me lies to pull off the mask from sophistry of every description, no antagonist shall have to complain of me, that I am unwilling to listen to or make allowances for any explanation of his views which he may choose to offer. If the sticklers for *free will* and *human merit*, will but concede to me, that it never was their intention to say or insinuate that the creature can of itself originate what is good; and that all they meant to assert by the use of the phrase *human merit* was, that, laying the origin of goodness out of the question, and viewing the quality merely as something which exists, there is a uniform and necessary connexion between goodness on the one hand and happiness on the other; I have no hesitation in admitting the truth and accuracy of their position. In that case there is in reality no dispute between us. I do not deny, nor have I ever denied, that there always is annexed to and inseparably connected with goodness, a degree of happiness exactly proportioned to and commensurate with the degree in which goodness exists; and if any man shall feel disposed to denominate this *happiness* the *reward of goodness*, although I might not,

from the dread of being mistaken, choose thus to express myself, such a person nevertheless runs no risk of involving himself in a dispute with me on this account. If, however, the supposed individual shall—with a species of sophistry but too common among the advocates of *free will*—attempt to pervert my concession, which respects merely *goodness considered as existing in the creature,* into an admission that *goodness may derive its origin from the creature,* he will find me again at my post, prepared to contend to the very last in opposition to a doctrine which is utterly subversive of the revealed character of the Supreme Being. In fact, that no ambiguity may attach to my statements and admissions, I take leave, in the most positive and unequivocal terms to deny, in the first place, that goodness either does originate or can originate with the creature—to deny, in the second place, that goodness possessed by the creature is meritorious, or is of the nature of an obligation imposed by the creature upon the Creator; the fact being, that by conferring the quality of goodness upon the creature, the Creator *obliges himself* to confer along with it every quality which is suitable to and consistent with it, and among the rest the quality of happiness—and to deny, in the third place, that the degree of happiness bestowed can ever exceed the degree of goodness which it is designed to accompany; or, to express myself in the form of a general principle, to deny, that the blessings and benefits conferred by the Supreme Being upon his creatures, can ever be inconsistent with or disproportioned

to one another. Should the doctrines involved in these denials of mine, which I have no hesitation in proposing as so many theological axioms, be conceded to me by any who have hitherto advocated the cause of *free will*, and *human merit*, I repeat, that all controversy between them and me is at an end. Such persons, however, must be made aware, that the necessary consequence of their concession is, the abandonment by them of the idea of any thing like *conditionality* or *meritoriousness* on the part of the creature; and the resolving by them of every thing that happens into the sovereign good pleasure, and omnipotent energy of the Creator, as its sole and efficient causes.* This leads me to remark, in the third and last place, that, from the entire and necessary dependence of the creature upon the Creator, it follows, that what *the natural mind* regards as *conditions*, are in reality merely *a series of means* by which the Creator effectuates his purposes. The difference between *conditions* and *means* may, at first sight, and to the superficial, appear to be trifling, but it is in fact neither more nor less than the difference between *the creature rendering the Creator subservient to his purposes* on

* Should any of my readers feel a desire to see the erroneous views of *naturalists* respecting *free will* thoroughly exposed, and (bating a few particulars) scriptural statements respecting it proposed and illustrated in a most masterly manner, they cannot do better than consult Luther's reply to Erasmus, entitled, *de servo arbitrio*, or President Edwards' celebrated work on *the freedom of the will*. Luther's treatise, which is argumentative, and drawn up in a more popular and less metaphysical style than the elaborate and occasionally obscure essay of Edwards, was some years since presented to the public in an English dress, and enriched with many learned and valuable notes, by the late Mr. Vaughan of Leicester.

the one hand, and *the Creator rendering the creature subservient to His* on the other. If by *conditions* performed by me I create to myself a claim upon God, then, in so far I am God's superior—but if, by a series of wisely-adjusted and powerfully-executed means, God contrives in all respects to accomplish His purposes in and through me, then, by so doing, he manifests Himself, as is but fitting, to be my superior. Now the latter is the view of God's character presented in the scriptures, and adopted by every spiritually-enlightened mind. And this, whether we view God as acting in the department of *nature*, or in that of *grace*. In the former, we perceive Him laying the foundation of that contrast, without which the distinction between *inferior* and *superior* never could have existed. In the latter, we perceive Him bringing out and developing His own character in contradistinction to the character of the creature; and by the very fact of His thereby communicating to the creature the understanding of His character, communicating to him likewise the enjoyment of His nature; John xvii. 3. This being understood, man immediately and necessarily appears to be, not *the performer of conditions*, but *the means of divine manifestation* by being *the recipient of divine blessings*. Man is not *by fulfilling conditions* constraining God to do or be what He is—but God is *by a series of means* elevating man to a dignity which from everlasting He has destined him to possess. It is not our love to God which produces His to us, but it is His love to us which produces ours to Him. *We love Him*, not that He may love us, but *because He first*

loved us; 1 John iv. 19. Nay, so abhorrent to the whole strain and tenor of the sacred volume, is the idea of God's love to us having been in any respect whatever *conditional,* or *the result of our previous love to Him,* that one of the inspired apostles, after having laid it down as an axiom that *Christ died for us while we were ungodly and sinners,* Rom. v. 6, 8, founds upon this very circumstance the following powerful specimen of *a fortiori* reasoning: *If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life; verse* 10. Even the work of Christ, great, glorious, and important as it is; and conspicuous as is the place which it occupies in the plan of redemption; is not, properly speaking, *the condition of salvation;* but *the means—the necessary means,* I admit—*of divine manifestation.* It was not because Christ loved God, and fulfilled His righteous law, that God, otherwise reluctant, was induced to love sinful mortal man;—it was not because

> The Son of God,
> In whom the fullness dwells of love divine,

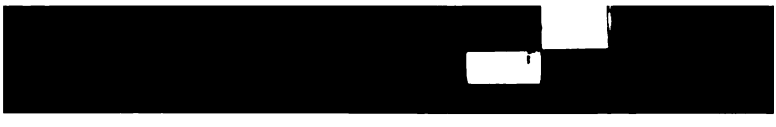
interposed in our behalf, that God was induced to alter his original intention with regard to mankind; and to save those who otherwise,

> Without redemption,
> Must have been lost, adjudged to death and hell,
> By doom severe.*

No; the language of scripture explicitly declares, that the redemption of Christ was *the effect,* not *the cause* of

* Milton's Paradise Lost.

divine love. It was not *in consequence of* the death of Christ, that God was induced to love the world; on the contrary, it was *in consequence* and *as the manifestation of* His love, that *God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him;* 1 John iv. 9. In the strictest conformity with which, the Messiah himself informs us, that *the work* which he *finished,*—so far from having been undertaken by him independently of God, and with a view to effect a change in the divine purpose,—was actually *the work which* the Father *gave him to do.* John xvii. 4. It thus appearing that from first to last—from its commencement upon earth till its consummation in the paradise above—the whole scheme of God's dealings with man, is merely the employment and carrying into effect by God himself of *a series of means,* having for its object and issue the communication of the divine nature and everlasting happiness to His intelligent creatures; can we conceive a system by which *conditionality* or *meritoriousness* on the part of the creature could have been more effectually excluded; or one by which *eternal life* could, more decidedly, in the literal and fullest extent of the meaning of the terms, have been shewn to be *the gift of God?*



CHAPTER IV.

CALVINISM AS REGARDS ETERNAL LIFE INCONSISTENT WITH ITSELF.

Scrawled this additional page of life's log-book. One day more is over of it and of me:—but "which is best, life or death, the gods only know," as Socrates said to his judges, on the breaking up of the tribunal. Two thousand years since that sage's declaration of ignorance have not enlightened us more upon this important point; for, according to the Christian Dispensation, no man can know whether he is *sure* of Salvation—even the most righteous—since a single slip of faith may throw him on his back, like a skaiter, while gliding smoothly to his paradise. Now, therefore, *whatever the certainty of faith in the facts may be, the certainty of the individual as to his happiness or misery,* IS NO GREATER THAN IT WAS UNDER JUPITER.

LORD BYRON'S Life.

Having thus stated what appears to me to be amply sufficient for establishing the position, that *eternal life is gratuitously bestowed,* a reader ignorant of religious controversy would be apt to conclude that my work was completed. "If it be the substance of the divine record," such a one will say, "that *God hath freely given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son;* then it is evident that every man who believes this must possess

the perfect certainty of his own personal enjoyment of everlasting life, or that principle which you denominate *the assurance of faith.*" Nothing, I admit, can be plainer; and yet, strange to tell, it as at this very point that my struggle with religionists begins. When I say religionists I do not mean the followers of Socinus or Arminius;* for they, avowedly resting their hopes of

* As some of the followers of John Wesley, in spite of the nature and tendencies of their creed, do appear to have apprehended the Gospel, it would have been gratifying to me, could I, with truth, have excepted that large, respectable, and flourishing community, from the charge of entertaining *conditional*, and, therefore, *merely natural views* respecting the subject. But how can I do so? It is true, they represent *the assurance of faith*, or, as they are fond of expressing themselves, *the witnessing of the spirit*, as one of the privileges of believers; but how different *the assurance itself*, which, *as a body*, they contend for, from *that* which the scriptures speak of;—and how different *the mode* in which, according to them, the assurance arises, from *that* in which, according to the scriptures, it is produced. How different *the assurance itself;* for *Wesleyan assurance*, is merely a conviction, that *God now loves them, and that He will continue to love them, provided they continue to love Him;* in other words, it is merely *the conditional hope of the Arminians*—see above, page 23. Whereas *the scriptural assurance of the Saints*, is, *the absolute, unconditional, and infallible certainty, that, as God in Christ now loves them, so He has loved them from everlasting, and will continue to love them to everlasting.* Again, as to *the mode of acquiring assurance.* Believers, according to the Wesleyans, attain to this privilege, by satisfying themselves, not merely *that Christ hath wrought out a perfect (?) righteousness in their behalf*, but *that, over and above this, the Spirit of Christ hath wrought out a work of grace in their hearts.* Believers, according to scripture, become professed of *faith, assurance*, or *the absolute certainty of everlasting life*, (for they are all identical modes of expression), merely, by being persuaded or satisfied, that *Jesus was delivered for their offences, and rose again for their justification;* and, that *his blood cleanseth them from all sin*—this very *persuasion* or *satisfaction* being *itself*, without any adjunct or addition whatever, *the work of grace.* Now, can a hope like that of the Wesleyans, which by its very nature must be *conditional*, be confounded with a hope like that which I advocate, from which by its very nature all *conditionality* is excluded? I am sure that respectable Wesleyans—ardent as they generally are

everlasting life either in whole or in part upon their own fancied good deeds, must, like all other open despisers of the sacred record, be left to reap the bitter fruits of their own folly. It is with the professed disciples of Calvin that my controversy lies—with the men who have it continually in their mouths, and lay it down as one of the leading and fundamental articles of their creed, that *eternal life is the gift of God.* It is far from being improbable that these very persons will denounce the immediately preceding part of this treatise as perfectly unnecessary and uncalled for. "Whatever we may think of your mode of conducting the argument,"

for the interests of holiness, Rom. x. 3, and convinced that a hope which is altogether *independent of conditions*, would be exceedingly detrimental to these, Rom. vi. 1, &c.,—can be no more desirous to have *their* assurance identified with *mine*, than I feel disposed to have *mine* identified with *theirs*. I, and my fellow believers, whether *nominally* Catholics or Protestants; Wesleyans, Calvinists, or Universalists; are all *absolutely certain*, not that we *may have* or that we *shall have*, but that *we have* and *cannot by any possibility cease to have*, everlasting life. John iii. 36, x. 28, 29, 1 John v. 11. Whereas *systematic Wesleyans*, like *systematic Naturalists* of every other description, are hoping, that *upon the fulfilment of certain conditions they shall have everlasting life*, or, are afraid, that *although they have it now they may nevertheless afterwards forfeit it.* Shall I not have the thanks of my Methodistic friends, for thus carefully separating between *my licentious and antinomian assurance*, as they are pleased to deem it; and *an assurance which they have taken the greatest care so to guard and conditionalize as in their opinion effectually to secure the interests of morality.* I cannot help here congratulating the body of Wesleyan Methodists, on the amazing tact and ingenuity which have been displayed in defence of their system by one writer—whose works, now lying before me, are I know deservedly held in high repute among them—I mean, the late Mr. Fletcher of Madely. So much have I been captivated by the style, the *natural* piety, and the other excellencies of this writer, that, had I not known the truth, I should almost have been tempted with him to prefer seeking after and acquiring *the imperfect righteousness of the creature, to being found clothed with the perfect righteousness of the Creator.*

is likely to be their language, "we hold and glory in the doctrine of eternal life being gratuitously bestowed upon the children of men. Nay, we are satisfied that no man who understands the gospel can entertain the slightest doubt in reference to the subject; and, consequently, in so far as respects us, you have given yourself a great deal of trouble to very little purpose." My Calvinistic friends will have the goodness to excuse me if I presume to differ from them in regard to the estimate which they have formed of their own religious sentiments; and if I inform them that the immediately preceding part of this treatise was written expressly *for their use.* So far from Calvinists as a body believing *eternal life to be the gift of God,* I am obliged, however reluctantly, to bring against them the broad and unqualified charge of holding views which stand diametrically opposed to that doctrine.

A charge so decided as this requires, of course, to be substantiated by proofs. These, I am sorry to say, it is not difficult to procure. They are furnished in great abundance both by friends and foes. That I may not, however, lay myself open to the imputation of any want of candour, out of their own mouths will I condemn the followers of Calvin. This I will do, first, by the answer which every genuine Calvinistic reader must return to the appeal which I am about to make to his own conscience; and, secondly, by the language employed by Calvin himself, and several approved theologians of the school of which he was the founder.

FIRST. Let me make an appeal to the conscience of every Calvinist by whom this treatise may be perused.

I now suppose myself to address one who professes to believe that eternal life is, in the strictest sense of the terms, *the gift of God.* To such a person my language would be the following. "You are no doubt aware, my dear friend, that the word *gift* means something which is *gratuitously bestowed*; or that *a gift* stands distinguished from *wages* by this very circumstance, that the former is bestowed without any reference to a condition, whereas conditions enter into and constitute the very essence of the latter, Rom. xi. 6. Farther, a very slight degree of reflection must teach you, that in order to vitiate and destroy the gratuitous nature of any favour or privilege, it is not necessary that a great number of conditions should be prescribed and should require to be performed previous to the enjoyment of it; the interposition of a single condition between what is called a gift and its enjoyment, being amply sufficient to alter its nature and bring it under the head or category of wages. These things being premised and understood, permit me to observe, that believing eternal life to be the gift of God, or to be gratuitously bestowed, as you profess to do, you necessarily believe it to be bestowed *on yourself.* Now mark well what you say, for I can allow no shuffling or subterfuge here. To the following question I demand from you a candid, explicit, and straight-forward answer. Maintaining, as you do, that eternal life is the gift of God, can you hesitate about maintaining likewise that it is the gift of God *to you?*

Are you ignorant of what is implied in the former of these two propositions? If you declare that you perceive eternal life to be bestowed upon the children of men gratuitously, that is, without any reference to conditions performed or to be performed by them in order to their entitling themselves to the enjoyment of it, what is this but in other words to declare that you perceive it to be absolutely, certainly, and indefeasibly secured to them; and can you utter such a declaration as this, understanding what you say, without perceiving eternal life to be *your own personal privilege?* Are not, the perceiving of eternal life to be *gratuitously bestowed*, and the perceiving of it to be *bestowed on yourself personally*, from the very nature of the case, synonymous and convertible modes of expression?"

Now for the answer.

"I do perceive that eternal life, as the gift of God,—as being gratuitously bestowed by our heavenly Father,—is his gift to me. Did I feel doubtful respecting my own personal interest in that unspeakably glorious privilege, it is plain, that while in words I was openly proclaiming my conviction of its being a gift or being unconditionally bestowed, I was secretly and in reality imagining, that some condition required of me, before I could inherit it, either had not been or might not be performed by me; in other words, my profession would necessarily contradict my private sentiments. But self-contradiction so gross and glaring I, as a believer in the divine record, cannot be guilty of; and therefore being infallibly certain that eternal life is the gift of God, I

am likewise certain—infallibly certain—that I myself personally am a partaker of it; and that a privilege secured to me, not on the ground of any condition or conditions performed or to be performed by myself, but by the good pleasure of the Most High through the medium of my everlasting union with his Son, nothing can by any possibility deprive me of." Allow me to extend to you the right hand of fellowship, my dear brother. There is not,—there cannot be,—any controversy between you and me. Your faith is the faith of the apostles—that faith which Peter has denominated *precious*—that faith in the possession of which life everlasting consists. We can understand each other and rejoice together. Your profession, it is true, does not tally in all respects with the genuine Calvinistic system; but that is of little consequence; for, what is far better, it tallies with the scriptures themselves. You are joining with the apostles and the whole body of the redeemed, in receiving it as the record or testimony of God *that he hath given eternal life to you;* and having thus ascertained that *God is love,* in the only way in which his character could have become known to you—namely, by the love which you perceive him to have borne and to bear towards yourself personally—you have the divine nature implanted in you. *Loving God as having first loved you,* you are dwelling in God, and God is dwelling in you. Let us rejoice together, again I say, my dear brother; for we are fellow heirs of the same heavenly inheritance, and are travelling together towards the same heavenly abodes.

But is the answer supposed, that which I am likely to obtain from the great majority of Calvinistic professors? Will they, while they profess to believe that eternal life is the gift of God, profess to believe likewise that it is certainly and infallibly the gift of God *to them?* Alas! no. The followers of Calvin when probed to the bottom are found in general to be as decided sceptics in religion, as the Socinian, Pelagian, and Arminian heretics, whom they, without hesitation or mercy, condemn.

The answer of my Calvinistic reader to the question proposed by me, is but too likely to be in the following strain. "I believe that eternal life is the gift of God. Nay, I am satisfied that no human being ever yet entered into heaven in virtue of his own good works, or, by the performance of any conditions whatever. *Still however I find it difficult, nay impossible to say, that I perceive eternal life to be the gift of God to me. I am so vile—so depraved—so unworthy. I am certain that it will be the gift of God to me if*——"* Stop, my good friend. I have heard enough. Your language tells me, and tells all who are possessed of the Spirit of Christ, that you know not the gospel. Having never yet seen that God is love,—by perceiving that eternal life is conferred on you, and secured to you, in consequence of what God is in himself,—you have never yet passed

* All this translated into plain English is, "it is true that God hath declared himself to bestow eternal life *unconditionally*; and yet, eternal life if bestowed in my case, must be bestowed *conditionally*." A tolerably modest and yet extremely common way of calling God a liar.

the threshhold of Christianity. Contradicting yourself, by clogging with a condition or series of conditions *in your own case*, that which with the same breath you had declared to be bestowed without any reference whatever to conditions *when bestowed at all*,—you shew that you belong to the number of those of whom an inspired writer has said, that *that they know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm.* Like the parrot you have got hold of certain scriptural phrases; but, like the parrot also, you shew yourself to be entirely ignorant of their meaning.

God knows, it is not from a spirit of unkindness and asperity, but with deep heartfelt regret, that I utter these words. It is love to the souls of my fellow men —it is perhaps an overweeningly anxious desire to be of service to them—that wrings from me these statements. When I see even Calvinists, that is, professing Christians of a superior stamp, *perishing* on every side of me *for lack of knowledge*, can I decline doing what in me lies to draw their attention to, and if possible render them aware of, their awful situation?

But if I am to be of any service to the class of men for whose sake chiefly I now write, it is impossible for me to rest here. Obvious as is the contradiction, between the professed and the real sentiments of the great majority of Calvinists respecting eternal life, to every man by whom the subject is understood; it is probable, I might almost say certain, that scarcely one of those who, if questioned in the manner above supposed, would at once be chargeable with it, has yet been

able to perceive how he could be so. It will be necessary, therefore, for me to go still more minutely to work, and to try if, by a few additional statements and questions, such a person's blundering cannot be made palpable even to himself.

The great majority of professing Calvinists, if examined respecting their own personal hope towards God, will, if sensible and honest men, be obliged to confess, that *they are not absolutely certain of possessing eternal life.* They have *a faint hope,* or *a good hope,* as the case may be, of finally reaching the Heavenly Glory; but they conceive that it would be presumption—daring blasphemous presumption—for them to express themselves confidently in regard to the subject. Let me now endeavour to shew them, as Calvinists, the glaring inconsistency—the marked self-contradiction—implied in their language. "We are certain," say they, "that eternal life is *the gift of God;* and that there never yet was an instance of its having been enjoyed by the children of men *on any other footing.* If not enjoyed *gratuitously,* we are satisfied that it cannot be enjoyed *at all.*" So far well. Then you are certain that you yourselves are partakers of it. "Oh no; we are very far indeed from being so; on the contrary, we are not without fears, that we ourselves may yet finally come short of it." That is, my good friends, you profess to regard eternal life one moment *as the gift of God,* and another moment *as not the gift of God:* pray how do you reconcile the contradiction? "No such thing; we are certain that eternal life is the gift of God; we only say

that we are not certain of its being *the gift of God* TO US." I beg your pardon; you do contradict yourselves; and were it not that *darkness hath blinded your eyes*, you yourselves would be conscious that the language which you have just been employing is very nearly the *ne plus ultra* of inconsistency—very nearly the grossest form in which self-contradiction could be expressed. You confess that you are not without doubts and fears respecting your own personal enjoyment of eternal life. Now, doubts and fears spring from a suspicion—whether avowed or not is of no consequence to my present argument—that something remains to be possessed or to be fulfilled by you, before you can be entitled to derive comfort from the divine promises. If you call in question the genealogy thus assigned by me to doubts and fears, it is surely not too much to ask you to substitute a better. But how is this possible? Unless some idea of eternal life being attained to and enjoyed *conditionally* were lurking in your minds, whence could your doubts and fears arise? Unless there were in you some latent suspicion, that you do not yet possess the condition or conditions upon which you conceive everlasting life to depend, on what principle is your anxiety respecting a future state to be accounted for? Can any thing be plainer, than that if you apprehended the blessing in question as bestowed on you *unconditionally*, you would likewise and as a matter of course apprehend it as bestowed on you *certainly*? Your own consciences, if listened to, will inform you that, notwithstanding all your professions to the contrary, you have

suspicions that eternal life may after all be *conditionally* bestowed; and that to these suspicions of yours may be traced up your doubts and fears. But if so, how can you, conscious of cherishing such views and feelings, pretend to say, that you regard eternal life as a blessing which is *unconditionally* bestowed? Why, out of your own mouths you condemn yourselves. Take, then, your alternative. Either aver that in your view of matters eternal life is *unconditionally* bestowed, you, consistently with that declaration, perceiving it to be *already and certainly your own property;* or, conscious that you entertain doubts and suspicions respecting your own personal enjoyment of it, hesitate not to avow, like honest men, that your views of the subject are *conditional.* What I am solicitous about, is, that while you are labouring under the suspicion of some condition or conditions, upon which, as you conceive, the inheritance of everlasting life depends; and while, consequently, you are filled with doubts and fears respecting your own personal enjoyment of the privilege; you should not wrong your consciences, nor expose yourselves to the ridicule of the discerning, by pretending to take an *unconditional* view of the matter. Cannot you see, that to speak of eternal life as *in every case the gift of God,* is to speak of it as *in every case bestowed unconditionally;* and yet that to admit the existence in your minds of doubts and fears respecting your own personal enjoyment of it, is virtually to declare that you are expecting it *to be bestowed in your own case conditionally.* Labouring under doubts and

fears, respecting your own enjoyment of eternal life, and yet professing to regard it as God's gift, how do you attempt to reconcile the glaring—the monstrous inconsistency?

I trust that I have been able to express myself in reference to this point, with so much simplicity and perspicuity, as to render it almost impossible for any honest and reflecting person to mistake my meaning. The principle upon which I proceed is, that the mind of man cannot, at one and the same time, be taking two self-contradictory views of the same subject. Eternal life may be regarded as *bestowed unconditionally;* or it may be regarded as *bestowed conditionally;* but it cannot be regarded in both lights at once. If seen to be bestowed *unconditionally,* it is seen likewise to be bestowed *personally;* for, if after confessing that I believed it to be bestowed *unconditionally,* I could not confess that I believed it to be bestowed *on myself,* I must mean that I conceive some *condition* or *conditions* of the enjoyment of it to remain unfulfilled in my particular case; that is, I must contradict myself. On the other hand, if I regard eternal life as being bestowed *conditionally,* then consistently enough am I distressed with doubts and fears respecting my own personal possession of it; nay, consistently enough must these doubts and fears continue to distress and annoy me, unless or until I shall be satisfied, that the condition or conditions requiring to be performed by me have been complied with; but in that case, I am certainly not entitled to say, that I regard eternal life as being *the gift of God,* or *unconditionally*

bestowed. Let the professor of the Calvinistic creed take his choice; let him maintain, either that eternal life is bestowed *unconditionally,* and that therefore it is *his own property;*—or that it is not the gift of God, but bestowed *conditionally,* and that, therefore, he is *doubtful respecting his own ultimate possession of it;* —but let him not outrage scripture and common sense, by pretending to hold both views at one and the same time.

What a curious state of matters does the prosecution of the inquiry, in which we are now engaged, disclose to us. Calvinists, *as a body,* professing to believe that eternal life is bestowed *unconditionally;* and yet, *as individuals,* holding it be bestowed *conditionally.* Confident, in their reasonings with Socinians and Arminians, that the blessing springs solely and exclusively from the good pleasure of the Creator, and is completely irrespective of any conditions performed or to be performed by the creature;—and yet fearful, in their own personal experience, *lest they themselves should not possess or perform the conditions upon which alone they conceive that it can be attained to!* It can only become theirs as *the gift of God* or *unconditionally;* and yet, strange to tell, it must be *conditionally enjoyed by them! Oh! that men were wise!*

But after all it must be admitted, that only he who understands the gospel, is qualified to detect the ignorance and blundering of those who would fain pass for believers of it. The natural mind is blind to its own state; and, therefore, even when *conditionalizing* the

glad tidings of *life everlasting* in the most glaring manner, will fancy itself to be entertaining views strictly consistent with themselves, and with the word of truth. One belonging to a very numerous class of professors, after being obliged to confess that he sees eternal life to be his, only *on condition of his being proved at last to have truly believed;* or, *of his standing in the truth;* or, *of his persevering to the end;* will be found, nevertheless, maintaining sturdily that he sees eternal life to be *the gift of God,* or, *unconditionally bestowed:* aye, and scoffing at every one as *an unbeliever,* who does not profess to take *the same absurd and inconsistent view of the subject that he himself does.* Nay, it is more than probable that he will join with the open and avowed sceptic, in assailing, sneering at, and running down, as mere Pharisaism, the profession of the apostolic faith by the children of God; a profession resting on the revealed fact of *the gratuitous nature of eternal life.* WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF GOD, *and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And* WE KNOW *that the Son of God is come;* AND HATH GIVEN US AN UNDERSTANDING THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM THAT IS TRUE; AND WE ARE IN HIM THAT IS TRUE, *even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.* 1 John v. 19, 20. Well, there is no helping these things; if men will persist in *conditionalizing* blessings which God has declared that he bestows *unconditionally,* they must e'en be permitted to take their own way; only, they must not be surprised, if the result shall prove them to be pursuing, what Sandeman, one of the ablest

of religious controversialists, has sarcastically but happily denominated, "a devout path to Hell."

SECONDLY. That Calvinism is inconsistent with itself, *in so far as respects the doctrine of eternal life being God's gift;* or that Calvinists, whatever may be their profession in regard to the matter, *do not in reality believe eternal life to be gratuitously bestowed;* may be proved by referring to the language of Calvin himself, and to that of several approved theologians belonging to the school of which he was the founder.

The manner in which the appeal addressed by me to the conscience of every genuine Calvinist must be answered by him, might of itself have sufficed to stamp the character of the Calvinistic system. If *personally* the Calvinist expects to have eternal life *conditionally bestowed on him,* what can give a fairer view of the nature and tendency of the doctrines which he has embraced? Still, however, were I to stop here, it might be alleged, and that too with some shew of plausibility, that I was drawing my conclusion from what was merely an error *of the individual;* and what, therefore, was not justly chargeable *against the system.* "The professing Calvinist may be *conditionalizing* the gospel, and yet Calvinism itself may be guiltless." Under these circumstances, it becomes necessary for me to shew, that the personal and individual sentiments of the Calvinist, are neither more nor less than a legitimate expression of the sentiments of the body to which he has allied himself; and that the system of Calvin, as it comes out in

his own writings, and in those of many of his distinguished followers, tends to inspire such as have embraced it with *conditional* views respecting the enjoyment of life everlasting. As in a case of this kind it is to be wished that the proof should be as full, distinct, and satisfactory as possible, I shall not merely shew, in the first place, that, according to the system in question, *doubts and fears respecting his own personal interest in eternal life may be cherished by a believer*—a circumstance of itself sufficient to establish its *conditional* nature—but also, in the second place, that *conditionality directly and avowedly enters into, and constitutes the very essence of this system.* Besides, in order to a still further development of the subject, and the imparting of complete satisfaction to the minds of my readers, it may not be amiss to subjoin to the proofs of the *conditionalizing* nature of Calvinism itself, some proofs of the *conditionalizing* taint derived from it by systems, which, agreeing with it in the main, have been propounded by their respective authors as improvements upon it.

1. It is a fundamental principle of Calvinism, that a man who believes the gospel, *may nevertheless labour under doubts and fears respecting his own future and final destiny.*

After what has been shewn under the immediately preceding head, it is almost superfluous to remark, that doubts and fears respecting our future state, must originate in a suspicion of some one condition or

another, requiring to be fulfilled in or performed by us, before eternal life can be secured to us. But the man who supposes that *any condition* requires to be fulfilled or performed before he can inherit life everlasting, is not and cannot be regarding that blessing as *the gift of God*, that is, as *unconditionally bestowed*. From this then it is obvious, that any system which involves in it as one of its leading principles, that *a man who believes eternal life to be the gift of God*, may nevertheless *cherish doubts respecting his own personal interest in the privilege*, is, by fair and undeniable inference, chargeable with deluding its votaries; seeing that it induces them to think they are taking an *unconditional*, while in reality they are merely taking a *conditional* view of the subject.

It is not, certainly, my intention to annoy my readers with a long list of quotations adduced in proof of that, which, any man acquainted with Calvinistic divinity, and accustomed to listen to Calvinistic preachers, may easily verify for himself: and yet a few are necessary in order to justify the attack which I have made upon the system.

The first shall be the testimony of Calvin himself. In bringing a charge against any particular school, it would be strange, indeed, were we to overlook its founder.

To Calvin's definition of faith, which occurs in the third book of his Institutes, chap. 2d, sec. 7th *ap: fin:*, that it is "a firm and steadfast conviction of the love of God *to us*, resting on the truth of the promise freely

made in Christ, and having for its author and sealer the Holy Spirit,"* I can have no reasonable objection. His remarks on *the certainty of faith,* which are contained in the fifteenth and sixteenth sections of the same chapter and book, are likewise, on the whole, so very pleasing, instructive, and scriptural, that I deem myself warranted in recommending them to the attentive perusal of all who are desirous to have their views corrected and enlarged with respect to the subject. *O si sic omnia.* But, alas! at the beginning of section seventeenth, this profound and systematic divine, contrives to nullify all his preceding statements, by the manner in which he treats, and attempts to obviate, a very common objection. "But, it will be alleged in opposition to the doctrine just mentioned, that the actual experience of the faithful is extremely different; it being a fact, that while they recognise the love of God towards them, they are not only liable to uneasiness of mind,—a circumstance of frequent occurrence,—but are sometimes even agitated by the most dreadful terrors. Now, if the violence of the temptations to which they are exposed be so great as to be capable of thus disturbing their minds, how can this be accounted for consistently with *the absolute certainty* or *assurance of faith?* This objection is easily disposed of, if the doctrine which we really hold be attended to. While we teach that faith *ought to be (!)*

* Nunc justa fidei definitio nobis constabit, si dicamus, esse divinæ *erga nos* benevolentiæ firmam certamque cognitionem, quæ gratuitæ in Christo promissionis veritate fundata, per Spiritum Sanctum et revelatur mentibus nostris et cordibus obsignatur. Edit. 1609. fol. 107.

firm and steadfast, *we never intended to speak of a certainty such as could be affected by no doubts, or of a confidence proof against the assaults of every kind of uneasiness. On the contrary, what we have stated is, that a conflict with their own unbelief is perpetually taking place in believers; so far are we from holding that their consciences enjoy a tranquillity which is incapable of being disturbed by any alarms.*"* How unfortunate this *esse debere*—this *ought to be*—of the reformer of Geneva. How thoroughly does it taint a system of doctrines, in many, perhaps in most respects, sound and scriptural; and how impossible is it, by all the qualifications and modifications by which it is accompanied and followed, to disguise and do away with its native baneful tendency. Nay, having once tripped, how awfully is this learned and acute writer betrayed into the utterance of statements, still more flagrantly inconsistent with the word of truth. "In the mind of the believer," says he, "*certainty* is mixed with *doubt*;† (the reader will pardon me; the expression is not mine, but Calvin's);

* Atqui, (dicet quispiam), longe aliud experiuntur fideles, qui in recognoscenda erga se Dei gratia non modo inquietudine tentantur (quod saepe illis contingit) sed gravissimis etiam terroribus interdum quatefiunt: tanta est ad deturbandas eorum mentes tentationum vehementia: id quod non satis videtur cum illa fidei certitudine cohærere. Proinde nodus hic solvendus est si superiorem illam doctrinam stare volumus. Nos certe, dum fidem docemus *esse debere (!)* certam ac securam, *non certitudinem aliquam imaginamur quæ nulla tangatur dubitatione, nec securitatem quæ nulla solicitudine impetatur: quin potius dicimus perpetuum esse fidelibus certamen cum sua ipsorum diffidentia; tantum abest ut eorum conscientias in placida aliqua quiete collocemus, quæ nullis omnino turbis interpelletur.* Fol. 110, *falso numer:* 107.

† In fideli mente certitudo permixta est dubitatione. Ins. b. 3, c. 2, s. 18, f. 110.

in other words, a man who, through faith in the divine testimony, is certain of eternal life, as the gift of God, being secured to himself personally, *may nevertheless be uncertain respecting the subject, and may be suspecting that he can only attain to the possession of the privilege conditionally! How dim,* even at the best, *the fine gold* of all human divinity : and how necessary for those who would possess truth pure and unmixed, to seek for it, where alone it can be found, in *the lively oracles* themselves.

But whatever may have been the errors of Calvin himself, they are chiefly to be deplored, as having given rise to, and as having furnished an apology for, still wider deviations from the truth on the part of his professed followers. The more we descend along the stream of the reformation theology, the more muddily do we find its current to flow. What Calvin at first propounded with a certain degree of hesitancy, and with many qualifications and reservations, the divines of a succeeding age boldly and unequivocally avowed. Even before the close of the century in which Luther and Calvin lived, Pelagianism, or to speak of it by its more modern appellation, Arminianism, had made an open attack on several of the leading doctrines for which these eminent men and their immediate followers had contended ; and as Arminianism is by its very nature in respect to futurity a religion of *conditionality,* and therefore of *doubts and uncertainty,* it was scarcely to be expected, that, propagated with the zeal, learning, and industry which we know some of its early

supporters to have exhibited, men of a somewhat better spirit should have altogether escaped the contagion. That Calvinism had already deteriorated under the withering influence of its rival, is but too apparent from the decrees of the synod of Dordt, held 1618-19; in which, amidst all the care evinced by the fathers composing that assembly to dogmatise on *the five points*, it is impossible to overlook the symptoms of the working of that anti-Christian leaven, by which the purity and simplicity of divine truth have since been so fearfully corrupted.* I allude not so much to the evident leaning towards the *sublapsarian* sentiments, by which the decrees of that celebrated synod are distinguished, as to its members having allowed themselves to admit in express terms that *persons may doubt respecting their own personal interest in Christ and everlasting life*, (certainty concerning which is the very essence of faith

* Act. Nation. Dordrecht. cap. 1. art. 12 et 16. ap: pag. 251; cap. 3 et 4. art. 17. ap: pag. 266; *et specialiter* cap. 5. art. 11, 13. ap: pag. 272 et 273. *In eis Synodus ita loquitur*: Interim testatur scriptura fideles in hac vita cum variis carnis dubitationibus conflictari, et in gravi tentatione constitutos, hanc fidei plerophoriam, ac perseverantiæ certitudinem, non semper sentire. Verum Deus, Pater omnis consolationis, *supra vires tentari eos non sinit, sed cum tentatione præstat evasionem*, 1 Cor. x. 13: ac per Spiritum Sanctum perseverantiæ certitudinem in iisdem rursum excitat. Art. 11. Neque etiam in iis, qui a lapsu instaurantur, lasciviam aut pietatis incuriam procreat redeviva perseverantiæ fiducia; sed multo majorem curam, de viis Domini sollicite custodiendis, quæ preparatæ sunt, ut in illis ambulando perseverantiæ suæ certitudinem retineant, ne propter paternæ benignitatis abusum propitii Dei facies, (cujus contemplatio piis vita dulcior, subductio morte acerbior) denuo ab ipsis avertatur, et sic in graviores animi cruciatus incidant. Art. 13. If I am not mistaken, the Acts of the Synod of Dordt, in whole or in part, were translated into English, by the late Mr. Scott, of Aston Sandford.

in the divine testimony), and yet all the while be believers in that testimony. By this a wide door was opened for the entrance of unscriptural doctrines of every other kind. From this period it was but too evident that the glory had departed from the Calvinistic churches. It is true that for about a century more they languished, the stalking ghosts of what they once had been. Francis Turretin, previous to the year 1700, and Benedict Pictet soon after that date, wrote and published very able and very learned systems of divinity on Calvinistic principles; but both in the strongest terms maintaining that assurance of God's love to ourselves in particular is merely, at the utmost, something which the believer *may* or *should* possess; and maintaining consequently that believers may labour under doubts and fears respecting their own personal salvation.* These were the expiring efforts of Calvinism in the church of Geneva, I might almost say on the continent of Europe. A modified species of Socinianism, sprung from the ashes of the Calvinistic theology, at first covertly,† but in process of time openly and undisguisedly,‡ came to usurp its place.

* F. Turretin's Instit. Theol. Elenct. L. 4, Q. 13, *an fidelis possit esse certus de electione sua, &c.* Sect. 6, 7, 8, &c.——L. 15, Q. 17, *an fidelis possit et debeat esse certus de fide, &c.* Sect. 7 *et seq:* 31, *&c.*—L. 16, Q. 10, Sect. 12, &c. B. Pictet's *Theologie Chretienne, vol.* 2, *liv.* 10, *chap.* 8, *sect.* 8, *page* 49; *le meme liv. chap.* 10, *Reponse a l'objection* 10e, *pages* 78 *et* 79, *&c. a Geneve,* 1708.

† *L'Encyclopedie* article *Geneve.* The *Encyclopedie* was published as early as the middle of last century. See also D'Alembert's *defence of the article.*

‡ Haldane's *letter to Chaneviere;* Malan's *pamphlets;* Empaytay's *considerations; Modern Genevese Confession, &c. &c.*

My sketch of the progress and decline of continental Calvinism has been extremely brief, both to save overloading my pages with quotations, and because I hasten to put the English reader in possession of the sentiments of Calvinistic divines among ourselves respecting the point in question. That the framers of the articles of the Church of England were Calvinists, and that they intended these articles to be understood in a Calvinistic sense, is next to conceded by the learned, candid, and moderate Burnet, in his valuable work on the thirty-nine articles;* and that Calvinism continued to be the prevailing creed of the Anglican divines down to the reign of James I. *at least*, has I think been most satisfactorily proved by Toplady, in his "Historic proof of the doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England." That the Church of England clergy for a considerable period after the reformation, although like Calvin self-inconsistent, could sometimes, like that eminent divine, express themselves in a way exceedingly pleasing and scriptural, is apparent from the 6th of what are commonly called the Lambeth articles agreed on in 1595. "A true believer, that is, one who is endued with justifying faith, is certified, by the full assurance of faith,

* Particularly towards the close of his exposition of the 17th article. It is evident to be sure from the whole strain of his observations, that he wishes to ascribe to St. Augustin, rather than to Calvin, the honour of having formed the sentiments of the fathers of the English church. But although true that the influence of Augustin's religious creed, is extremely visible in the language employed by the English reformers in their articles and homilies, it is no less true, that it was not directly from the Bishop of Hippo, but indirectly, and after having passed through the alembic of Calvin's mind, that many of their leading sentiments were adopted.

that his sins are forgiven, and that he shall be everlastingly saved by Christ." Toplady's works, vol. 2, page 166, edit. 1825. The very close approximation to the truth by the earlier British Calvinists, is also proved by the confession of faith which was drawn up by Knox and his associates for the use of the Scottish reformers, and by Craig's Catechism. The former was published 1560; the latter about twenty or thirty years afterwards.* But, alas! the causes which produced a deterioration of Calvinism on the continent, were attended with a similar effect in this country. Arminianism came in like a flood with Charles I. and Archbishop Laud. Its influence upon the Calvinistic divines of Great Britain, both as a body and as individuals, was soon but too strikingly manifest.

By the Westminster Assembly, which held its sittings in virtue of a parliamentary ordinance issued in the year 1643, the doctrine, that *believers of the gospel may cherish doubts and fears respecting their own personal salvation,* is insisted on in the strongest and most unqualified terms. The following is the language of the 3d and 4th sections of the 18th chapter of their Confession of Faith. Sect. 3. "This infallible assurance *doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that* A TRUE BELIEVER *may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it:* yet, being enabled by the Spirit, to know the things which are freely given him of God, *he may,* without extraordinary revelation,

* Although rather before Calvin's time, how scriptural the sentiments of Patrick Hamilton, who suffered at St. Andrews in 1527. See Fox's Martyrology.

in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is *the duty* of every one, to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience; the proper fruits of this assurance: so far is it from inclining men to looseness." Sect. 4. "True believers *may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted;* as, by negligence in persevering in it; by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: *yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith,* that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, *out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the mean time, they are supported from utter despair.*"

It is impossible to imagine any proof of the charge brought by me against modern Calvinism, more explicit or decisive than this. What Calvin was content to hint at indirectly, and as if by constraint, is here set before us without any disguise, restriction, or qualification. What Calvin with apparent reluctance admitted as *a weakness appertaining to faith,* is here, by a strange perversity of taste, set down as actually *an article of faith.* In the former of the two sections, it is declared,

that the *knowledge of God's love to us,* which enters into and constitutes an essential part of Calvin's definition of the belief of the gospel, so far from being essential to its existence, may *in believers of the truth be entirely awanting.* And, in the latter, not merely is it asserted that a man *who believes,* may, (strange idea!) at the same time *be doubting;* but the way in which such a person is to *get rid of his doubts,*—supposing him *ever to get rid of them at all;*—and the way in which, *while doubting,* he is to be kept from *utter despair;* is, not by apprehending the divine testimony concerning the completeness of Christ's work and the gratuitousness of eternal life, but *by the discovery of some good thing in himself!* It is out of *the seed of God,* or *the life of faith,* or something similar existing in the *doubting believer's* (!) bosom, that, by the operation of the Spirit, (for the Spirit of God must have the compliment paid it of being an actor in this work of delusion), *the assurance of the believer* is to be extracted! Well, Swift was not so very far from the mark, when he represented one of the Laputan academicians as engaged in extracting sunbeams from cucumbers! And yet, what I have just quoted, are not merely the sentiments of one of the gravest, most learned, and most venerable bodies of divines, that ever assembled in Great Britain; but, along with the rest of the confession of which they constitute a part, have been adopted as the standard of her faith by the established Church of Scotland, as well as by numerous dissenting communities throughout the United Kingdom. Concerning God's

love to *ourselves personally*,—the belief of which, according to Calvin,* and according to higher authority than that of Calvin,† is *the faith of the gospel*,—believers of that gospel may, according to the Calvinistic church of Scotland and our Calvinistic dissenters, be found *doubting and hesitating!* How incredible! were it not that it is matter of fact. And yet, how easily accounted for on the principle suggested by the apostle, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness unto him.* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

A doctrine sanctioned by the authority of a body of men so distinguished as the Westminster Assembly, was sure to find supporters among Calvinistic divines in their individual capacity. Since the era of its sitting, accordingly, every writer having any pretensions to rank among Calvinists,—with the exception of the truly excellent man to whose sentiments I am afterwards more particularly to advert,—has maintained, that *to cherish doubts and fears concerning God's love to ourselves, is not inconsistent with the faith of the gospel.* Nay, the ingenuity of many of them has been put, as it were, on the stretch, to find out arguments calculated to support this perverted view of the subject. The following proofs of my position have been selected from such works, written by British Calvinistic divines, as are likely to be in the hands of considerable numbers of my readers.

Dr. John Owen, on account of his amazing learning, unwearied industry, and unquestionable integrity,

* See pages 140 and 141.

† Rom. iv. 25, v. 1. 1 John v. 11, &c.

deservedly ranks at the very head of the English Calvinistic divines of the seventeenth century. In the first chapter of his celebrated treatise on *justification*, after informing his readers, that "many great divines at the first *reformation* did, (as the Lutherans generally yet do), thus make the mercy of God in Christ, and thereby the forgiveness of our own sins, to be the proper object of justifying faith, as such;" and after endeavouring to shew, that their having done so, is to be ascribed to the circumstances in which they were placed; he adds the following remark, of itself sufficiently indicative of what were his own private sentiments with regard to the matter. "But yet withal I never read any of them, (I know not what others have done), who affirmed that every true and sincere believer always had *a full assurance of the especial love of God in Christ*, or of the pardon of his own sins; though they plead that this the scripture requires of them in a way of duty, and that this they ought to aim at the *attainment* of."* On the principle thus described as that of the early reformation divines, Dr. Owen corrected their definition of faith; maintaining, that "the adequate and proper object of justifying faith, or of saving faith in its work and duty with respect unto our justification, is," not *God's love in Christ to us in particular*, but, "*the Lord Jesus himself, as the ordinance of God, in his work of mediation, for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, and as unto that end proposed in the promise of the*

* Owen *on Justification*. London edition, 1816, p.p. 71, 72.

gospel."* Dr. Owen having thus *de consulto* excluded *the love of God to ourselves in particular*, from being formally the object of justifying faith; and having represented personal confidence towards God as being attained to in the way of duty or obedience; is it necessary for me to shew, that, as a matter of course, he held likewise the possibility of doubts and fears respecting his future state existing in the mind of the believer?

The next place to Dr. Owen, as regards popularity, although certainly not as regards learning, among the Calvinists of the 17th century, is due to the far-famed tinker of Elstow, John Bunyan. In that eminently-talented and original work of his, the Pilgrim's Progress——but why formally quote from a book which every man, woman, and child in Great Britain must

* See page 73, *ibid.* Owen's work on *spiritual-mindedness*, although valuable in many respects, is composed throughout on the false principle that marks, proofs, and evidences, of what he denominates spiritual-mindedness, discovered in ourselves, are calculated to relieve our minds from doubts respecting God's love to us, and consequently to confirm to us our personal Christianity. Far be it from me to utter a single word in disparagement of the talents and learning of a man, from whose writings I acknowledge myself to have derived much information and delight; but O how lamentable to think, that with all his astonishing theological attainments, he should have been ignorant of the simple scriptural fact, that *to seek for proofs of spiritual-mindedness in ourselves, in order to acquire confidence towards God,* IS ABSOLUTELY INCONSISTENT WITH THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS! That spiritual-mindedness consisting in the knowledge upon divine authority of our having eternal life freely bestowed on us and indefeasibly secured to us through the Son of God, we require not to seek for that comfort *from ourselves*, which is already and amply supplied to us *from the naked word of God!* Satisfied as we are by the bare unsupported testimony of God himself that he is our friend,—*the very essence of spiritual-mindedness*,—the existence of this principle is manifested by us, not in searching for evidences of our personal Christianity in our own thoughts, feelings, and affections, but *in living to him who*, we are absolutely certain, has *died for us and risen again.*

be acquainted with? Who has not read or heard of Christian getting into Doubting Castle; and of his having been brought under the discipline of Giant Despair?

While Owen and Bunyan were flourishing among the Calvinists of England, Mr. Wm. Guthrie, minister of Fenwick, was exercising a considerable influence over the minds of his Calvinistic Scottish countrymen. This gentleman wrote a treatise, for the express purpose of shewing *believers (?) how they should try to attain to a knowledge of their actually believing and having a saving interest in Christ!* The unexampled popularity which the little publication of which I am speaking has enjoyed, particularly in the West of Scotland, and the number of editions through which it has passed, warrant me in directing the attention of my readers towards it. The fact of a mere human being, undertaking to teach his fellow worms to discover *from an examination of their own thoughts, feelings, and conduct,* that which God himself undertakes to teach his people infallibly *by the manifestation of the truth as it is in Jesus to their consciences,* was no doubt rather bold and presumptuous on the part of the reverend author; but, as a specimen of the nature of those delusions which the mind of man is capable of practising upon itself, as well as upon others, it is extremely valuable. In a work composed on the express principle of *recognizing doubts and fears* as essential to the character of *a believer,* I can be at no loss to meet with proofs innumerable of the charge brought by me against Calvinists. Take the following, extracted

2 Cor. 13

almost at random. "The fifth thing to be premised is, the removal of some mistakes whereinto people may readily run themselves, when we are about to prove their interest in Christ. As, 1st, it is a mistake to think that every one who is in Christ doth know that he is in him; for many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know so much, until it be made out afterwards; 1 John v. 13. 'These things are written to believers, that they may know they have [a true title to] eternal life;' that is, that they may know they are believers, and so it is supposed they knew it not before. 2dly, It is a mistake to think that all who come to the knowledge of their interest in Christ do attain an equal certainty about the same. One may say, 'He is persuaded nothing present, or to come, can separate him from the love of God,' Rom. viii. 38. another cometh but this length, 'I believe, help my unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. 3dly, It is a mistake to think that every one who attaineth a strong persuasion of his interest doth always hold there; for he who to-day may say of the Lord, 'He is his refuge,' Psal. xci. 2, and 'his portion,' Psal. cxix. 57, will at another time say, 'He is cut off,' Psal. xxxi. 22, and will ask, 'if the truth of God's promise doth fail for evermore?' Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. 4thly,"——* But enough.

Few works have been more extensively read, or have acquired a greater reputation among British Calvinists,

* The title of Mr. Guthrie's book is, "The Christian's great interest, in two parts; 1st, The trial of a saving interest in Christ; 2dly, The way how to attain it." My extracts are taken from pages 97—98 of the Edinburgh edition of 1811.

than "The Fourfold State."* It is well known to have received the almost unqualified approbation of the celebrated Hervey.† Its author, Mr. Thomas Boston, Minister of Ettrick, in the county of Selkirk, Scotland, lived and flourished about the beginning of last century. The following is a specimen of the way in which he delivers his sentiments concerning the subject of the doubts and fears cherished by believers. "Objection.—But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful, how comes it to pass, that many of them, when dying, are full of fears, and have little hope? Answer.—It must be owned that all saints do not die in one and the same manner; there is a diversity among them as well as among the wicked; yet the worst case of a dying saint is indeed a hopeful one.——But the dying day of some saints may be like that day mentioned Zech. xiv. 7. *Not day, nor night. They may die under great doubts and fears; setting as it were in a cloud, and going to heaven in a mist.* They may go mourning without the sun, and never put off their *spirit of heaviness* till death strip them out of it. They may be carried to heaven through the confines of hell; and may be pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the new *Jerusalem;* and may be compared to a ship almost wrecked in sight of the harbour, which yet gets safe into her port.—There is safety amidst their fears, but danger in the wicked's strong confidence; and there is a

* Human nature in its fourfold state of primitive integrity, entire depravity, begun recovery, and consummate happiness or misery. Glasgow, 1759.

† In his dialogues of Theron and Aspasio. Vol. 2d.

blessed seed of gladness in their greatest sorrows.—There are three cases in which death cannot but be very uncomfortable to a child of God.——Lastly, when he has lost sight of his saving interest in Christ, and cannot produce evidences of his title to heaven. It is hard to meet death without some evidence of a title to eternal life at hand: hard to go through the dark valley, without the candle of the Lord shining upon the head. It is a terrible adventure to launch out into eternity, when a man can make no better of it, than a leap in the dark, not knowing where he shall light, whether in heaven or hell!"* True, Mr. Boston; it is certainly not an uncommon thing for persons professing *a species of Christianity* to take this strange and awkward leap; but this does not prove that any *believer in the divine testimony* ever did so.

The sermons of the late Mr. Robert Walker, of Edinburgh, are highly and deservedly esteemed among the superior classes of Scotch Calvinists, as models of condensed thought, and neat, chaste, finished composition.† From his sermon on Zech. ix. 12. *Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope, &c.* I select the following passage. "I need not observe to you, that the present condition of believers upon earth, is neither a state of perfect liberty, nor of uninterrupted peace.—These are the blessed ingredients which constitute the happiness of the Sion above; but while they sojourn in

* P.p. 305—307.

† Sermons on practical subjects, by Robert Walker, late one of the Ministers of the High Church, Edinburgh. Edin. 1811.

this strange land, they are liable to various and painful distresses.—Even after they have received 'the Spirit of adoption,' they may feel such returns of 'the spirit of bondage,'* as shall oblige them to cry out with David, 'my spirit is overwhelmed within me.—Attend unto my cry, O God, for I am brought very low.—Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name.' The remembrance of past guilt, the present feeling of indwelling corruption, the hidings of God's face, and the assaults and buffetings of their spiritual enemies, are all so many different prisons, in which the dearest of God's children may be shut up for a season. And we find some of them recorded in holy writ, who, during the time of this spiritual confinement, have felt such exquisite agony, that with difficulty they have been kept from razing the foundation, and quitting all hope.—Such was the case of Asaph, &c.——These strong examples are sufficient to prove, that there are other prisons besides the pit of an unconverted state. Prisons, where those who are near and dear to God, may, for wise and holy reasons, suffer a temporary confinement, on account of which they may be justly denominated *prisoners of hope.*"† Why, according to Mr. Walker's own shewing, it would appear to me that *prisoners of despair* would be a much fitter appellation for such persons. This was the view which Bunyan took of the matter; and upon his own principles he was right.—Into how many follies and absurdities have Calvinistic

* Where do the scriptures say so?

† Pages 125, 126.

divines been betrayed, by applying to David, Asaph, and Heman, language, which although uttered by them, was in reality applicable to, and descriptive of the experience of the Son of God.* Who can forget that it was David's Lord that said, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" and who that recollects this, can be at any loss to know, that it is the same person, who, in allusion to the agonies of mind which he was to undergo previous to his atoning sacrifice, says, "my spirit is overwhelmed within me," &c.

In *an Essay on the various fears to which God's people are liable*, written by the late Mr. Toplady, of Broad-Hembury, Devon, a distinguished and popular English Calvinistic writer of the last century, we find the doctrine of doubts and fears most strenuously advocated. Thus does he express himself. "Weak believers are sometimes apt to be afraid, that they are not in the number of God's elect." (Such persons are not believers at all). "They can indeed say with David, 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee:'" (Christ, by the way, is the man here spoken of:) "but they are not clearly satisfied, that this blessedness is theirs. For my own part, I look upon it as one of the best symptoms of a regenerate state, when a person is ardently desirous to know his election of God." (As well might it be regarded as one of the best symptoms of soundness of mind, for a person to be ardently desirous to know whether or not he was alive). "It is an inquiry, which the generality

* See Barclay, of Edinburgh's, *Essay on the Book of Psalms.*

of mankind never trouble themselves about; and, which none but a true believer is concerned for in earnest."* &c. &c. Thus speaks Mr. Toplady; and language similar to his will be found continually occurring in the works of Hervey, Romaine, Venn, and other eminent English Calvinists who wrote and flourished during the last century.

The late Mr. Thomas Scott, rector of Aston Sandford, for many years held a distinguished rank among English Calvinists. To this, his natural soundness of mind, strength of judgment, extent of theological knowledge, and indefatigable industry, fairly entitled him. From the number of editions which his various works, and in particular his laborious commentary on the scriptures, have passed through, I cannot be far wrong in regarding him as a fit expositor of the sentiments of the body to which he belonged. In the following way, then, does this oracle of Calvinism, when commenting on Heb. vi. 11, favour us with his sentiments respecting the subject matter of our present inquiry. "'Assurance of hope' should be distinguished from 'the assurance of understanding,' and from 'the assurance of faith.' He who so understands the gospel, as to perceive the relation of each part to all the rest, and its use as a part of one grand design; in something of the same manner, that a skilful anatomist understands the use and office of every part of the human body in relation to the whole; has 'the full assurance of understanding:' and those things which

* Toplady's works,—vol. 3, p. 372. London, 1825.

appear inconsistent, useless, or superfluous to others, he perceives essentially necessary to the system, or great design. The man, who is fully convinced, that this consistent and harmonious, though complicated design, is the work and revelation of God; and has no doubt the things testified are true, that the promises and threatenings will be fulfilled, and that Christ will certainly save all true believers, has 'the full assurance of faith:' though he may, through misapprehension, or temptation, or other causes, *doubt of his own personal interest in this salvation.* But he, who beyond doubt or hesitation is assured, that he himself is a true believer, interested in all the precious promises, sealed by the sanctifying Spirit, and 'a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;' has 'the full assurance of hope.'"

"'The full assurance of faith,' is the duty of every one: for he who doubts the truth of the testimony, or the faithfulness of the promises of God, questions his veracity: but 'the full assurance of hope,' *must be obtained and preserved by diligence;* and, though the want of it may generally be traced to a criminal source, it is not the *proximate* duty of every one, in fact of a very few.——The 'full assurance of hope,' in the highest meaning of the words, is attained by comparatively few; *and is seldom if ever preserved, without some degree of diminution or variation, through the remainder of life: but a prevailing assurance of acceptance, and of final salvation, is the privilege of all diligent and consistent Christians; and is, in them, seldom greatly interrupted, except by misapprehension, or by*

liar temptations and conflicts, OR BY THEIR BEING RAYED INTO SIN." Scott's Commentary, 6th edi-, 1823. These definitions of "the assurance of erstanding," "the assurance of faith," and "the rance of hope," are all very pretty, display a great of ingenuity, and might all be acquiesced in,—*if* . But, unfortunately for their author and for themes, they are entirely destitute of what believers of truth are apt to require in such cases,—*the sanc- of the word of God.* In what part of the sacred me is it declared, that that complete acquaintance its meaning and with the relation in which the ous parts of it stand to one another, which the author eased to denominate "the full assurance of under- ling," can ever be disjoined from "the full assu- of faith," and "the full assurance of hope?" re is it declared, that a man who has that complete ce upon the divine faithfulness and veracity, which thor denominates "the full assurance of faith," et *doubt of his own personal interest in the great m?* Where is it declared, that the phrase "full ce of hope" alone has respect to *our knowledge everlasting as belonging personally to us;* and s knowledge, instead of being derived by us om *the truth of the divine testimony concerning anifested to our consciences by the Holy Ghost,* ntrary *rests upon, and is to be sought for, ob- d preserved by us, as the reward of our own* Faugh! The whole system is rank; it the nostrils of every child of God. But the

most amusing circumstance is, that this same *full assurance of hope*,—that this same *certainty of everlasting life*, which is attained to, comparatively speaking, by so very few,—turns out to be *no certainty of everlasting life at all.* For *all* who possess *it*, (possess *it*, to be sure, for such is not *the certainty* which God's word when understood produces), *are liable to have it diminished*; and this not on extraordinary occasions merely, *but whenever they are betrayed into sin*; which, as believers are sinning continually in thought, word, or deed, *must be every moment of their lives!* Did the man who could denominate a conviction of God's love to us, which was thus liable to be overturned every moment, "the full assurance of hope," know what he was saying? or did he mean to insult the credulity of his readers? Talked he with reprobation of Arminianism? Why this is worse than Arminianism: for that abominable system is open and avowed in its opposition to the simplicity of the gospel; but this, under the pretence of giving God's children *bread*, is attempting to put them off with *a stone.*

Let me close my list of authorities, by referring to the evidence of Dr. Barr. His metaphysical acumen we have already seen displayed in his denial of *the infallibility of consciousness*; and it may be worth while to inquire, what claim he has to our regard on the score of his theological attainments. Holding as he does the rank of a minister in the Calvinistic Church of Scotland, and sanctioned as his sermon has been by the approbation of its leading periodical, as well as by

of some of the more serious part of his brethren, scertaining his sentiments respecting the point in tion, we ascertain the most recent and approved ı of stating religion among Calvinists in the Northern ict of the island. The professed object of the Dr.'s ion is *the peace which springs from believing*, which, the fashion of all who are ignorant of the truth, labours hard to shew is in reality *no peace at all.* it it may be proper to obviate a very dangerous pprehension, probably suggested by the view now n you. I have said that the believer *appropriates mself*" (!) "the salvation of the gospel, and that he so not *in consequence of any evidence he may have ined of an interest in it,* but *simply in the faith of testimony which God hath given concerning Christ.* let me state the amount of what is implied in this of appropriation. I do not mean that *the believer*" "appropriates salvation," (!) "so as to feel himself led to say, 'this certainly belongs to me.' The (!) "does not consist *in assuring ourselves of a per- l interest in the Saviour;* nor is it *a belief on the of the individual, that God loves him in Christ, and certainly bring him to the presence and enjoyment imself.* The appropriation of which I speak in- es no such conviction, nor has it *any thing to do ediately with our actual reconciliation.* What then it mean? It is simply *the appropriation of depen- e.*" *(?)* "Jesus is revealed as the Saviour of sinners. sinner I am invited to believe on him for my sal- n. On the authority of this general invitation, I

feel warranted to receive him as the ground of *all my confidence and hope.* I rest satisfied in the exercise of *an implicit* UNLIMITED *reliance upon him,* considering this to be at once my privilege and my duty. But in thus venturing to cast on him the burden of *my entire and exclusive dependence,* I do not presume on the fact of *my being an object of God's everlasting love.* This is a point which I have no right to take for granted, and which I am not called on to determine. Leaving it to God to make known his purpose of mercy *towards me* in his own way, I am concerned only to follow his direction by *a life of faith*" (see Galatians ii. 20,) "and holiness, fully assured that whatsoever he has promised he is faithful and able to perform. In the exercise of this *believing appropriation,* which forms *the very element of true peace,* the Christian REALIZES THE PRIVILEGES, TASTES THE COMFORTS, AND CHERISHES THE HOPES OF A CHILD OF GOD. HE HAS ACCESS IN THAT CAPACITY TO THE THRONE OF GRACE, WHERE HE CLAIMS A RELATION TO GOD AS HIS FATHER IN CHRIST, AND WHERE WITH FILIAL CONFIDENCE AND DELIGHT HE CAN POUR FORTH THE DESIRES OF HIS HEART. THE LANGUAGE OF APPROPRIATING CONFIDENCE, WHICH ABOUNDS IN THE DEVOTIONAL PARTS OF SCRIPTURE, HE CAN EMPLOY AS HIS OWN. OF THE REDEEMER HE CAN SAY, 'MY BELOVED IS MINE, AND I AM HIS.' HE IS MINE BY CHOICE, I AM HIS BY SELF-CONSECRATION." (Tolerably modest, to be sure.) "IN UTTERANCE OF THE SAME SENTIMENT, HE CRIES WITH

THOMAS, 'MY LORD, AND MY GOD.' The exclamation is descriptive of *his character* rather than of *his privilege:* it expresses not *the belief of his personal interest in the Saviour,*" *(!)* "but *the strength of his dependence upon him, the warmth of his attachment to him, and his desire of communion with him.*" *(!)* "Yet he who can say this, *and this is what* EVERY *believer can and does say,* he who in sincerity of heart can make use of this language, *has peace in Christ;* God sees no iniquity in him, looking upon him in the face of his anointed: and he shall *at length* taste the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, *having obtained possession of a peace, which, substantiated in actual experience,*" *(?)* "*shall embolden him to ask,* "*Who shall separate me from the love of Christ.*"* And now, gentle reader, after having carefully perused this long quotation, have the goodness to say if you understand it? According to the Dr., and according to the Calvinistic church of which he is a minister, the faith of the gospel does not imply that the individual believing *has any evidence of his having obtained an interest in Christ,* as the believer *does not feel himself entitled to say concerning salvation, this certainly belongs to me;* his faith *does not consist in assuring himself of a personal interest in the Saviour; nor is it a belief on his part that God loves him in Christ, and will certainly bring him to the presence and enjoyment of himself;* nay, *it has not* ANY THING *to do immediately with his*

* The Peace of Believing distinguished from Antinomian Assurance, 1829, p.p. 5, 6.

actual reconciliation :—and yet, *presto! begone!* according to the same authority, the person thus *destitute of any knowledge of his interest in Christ*, is found *realizing the privileges, tasting the comforts, and cherishing the hopes of a child of God*; such an one, speaking of Christ, can say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*; nay, he can even address his divine master in the strong and emphatic language of Thomas, *My Lord and my God!* He has *no assurance of his interest in Christ*:—and yet he can exercise *an implicit* UNLIMITED *reliance upon him!* In reading such absurdities as these, one is naturally tempted to question the sanity of their author. A believer *claims a relation to God as his Father in Christ*:—and yet, *he does not presume on the fact of his being an object of God's love!!!* And all this sanctioned, too, by the grave and reverend pastors of the Scottish established church! Well, if such quotations as the above prove nothing else, they at least establish my position, that in admitting doubts and fears respecting his own personal interest in eternal life to exist in the breast of a believer, Calvinism necessarily runs itself upon self-inconsistency.

Thus, then, have I proved, both from the writings of Calvin himself, and from those of his professed followers down to the present day, that, in their opinion, *believers may cherish doubts and fears respecting their own future enjoyment of everlasting life.* And, as such doubts and fears spring necessarily from a *conditional* view of the subject, I have thus likewise proved *indirectly*, that Calvinism, professing to regard eternal life as a blessing

which is *unconditionally* bestowed, and yet permitting suspicions that it may be *conditionally* bestowed, is, of necessity a self-inconsistent system.*

2. But it is not merely *indirectly*, or by representing persons who labour under doubts and fears concerning God's love to them as nevertheless believers, that Calvinism *conditionalizes* men's views of divine truth, and thereby stamps upon itself the broad character of inconsistency; for it does so likewise *directly*,

* If any of my readers are desirous to satisfy themselves still farther, as to my having given a fair representation of Calvinism, in so far as regards the subject of doubts and fears, they have only to consult such well-known works as Hervey's *Dialogues of Theron and Aspasio*; Romaine's *Life, Walk, and Triumph of Faith*; Newton's *Cardiphonia*; Scott's *Essays*; &c. The charge adduced by me is still more applicable to the writings of the Transatlantic Calvinistic divines, as may be seen by perusing Edwards *on Spiritual Affections*, Dickenson's *Letters*, &c. But, it may be alleged, that English hyper-Calvinism must be to my taste. "Are you not aware," it may be said, "that the doctrine of *the assurance of faith*, or *the personal certainty of eternal life*, being the privilege of believers, was much insisted on by the late Dr. Hawker of Plymouth, Mr. Wm. Huntingdon of London, (S. S.), and other persons connected with their party; and if so, how can you bring the charge of fostering the doctrine of doubts and fears against Calvinists without any exception?" I am perfectly well aware that a condemnation of *doubts and fears* is common among hyper-Calvinists; *but it is just this very sentiment of theirs which I dislike.* According to them "every believer of the gospel *ought to be* certain of possessing eternal life, and is deserving of blame in the event of his being uncertain respecting this all-important point:" according to scripture, every believer of the gospel *is* certain respecting it. Rom. v. 1, viii. 16. 1 John ii. 1, 2, v. 1, 11, &c. Does my reader pereeive no difference between the two statements? I grant that few have been more zealous and earnest in addressing *unbelieving believers*, and condemning their views and practices, than Dr. Hawker and his associates: but how unscriptural to address as *believers*, and as *the precious sons of the Lord*, those who, *by questioning God's love to themselves personally*, do manifesting a height of unbelief, which is emphatically denominated by the apostle, *the calling of God a liar?* 1 John v. 10.

by leading its votaries to seek for and rely on certain *conditions* of eternal life, as fulfilled in or performed by themselves.

The proofs which I have to submit under this head, will be best introduced by the two following observations.

1st. If in order to a believer's knowing that eternal life belongs to himself personally, he must discover himself to have undergone a certain change, and to possess certain qualities of which he was previously destitute, then, the discovery of his having undergone this change, and of his now possessing these qualities, is to his mind *the condition* of his personally inheriting eternal life. There is, by the very terms of the supposition, *something* interposed between his conscience and eternal life; and, as upon his being able to discover that he possesses this *something*, his hopes of personally enjoying the privilege depend, what is this but just in other words to say, that his own personal enjoyment of the privilege necessarily appears to himself *conditional and contingent?* By what fair and legitimate process of reasoning can this statement be overturned? It matters not whether the change in question be supposed to be great or small,—easy or difficult,—plain or mysterious;—for, if any thing, call it what you will, must take place in the believer, and must be discovered by him to have taken place in himself, before he can derive comfort from the work of Christ as having a reference to himself personally, then, that thing as being to his mind of the nature of a *sine quo non* or indispensable requisite

of his own personal enjoyment of eternal life, must be sufficient to *conditionalize* his views of the whole subject.

2dly. If the mind be thus, in reality, cherishing *conditional* hopes of eternal life, it is in vain to attempt to get rid of the charge of *conditionalizing* the subject, merely by avoiding the use of the word *condition*, and substituting some other term of similar import in its place. It is astonishing, and, were not the circumstance every day occurring, would be absolutely incredible, how men continue to dupe others, and dupe themselves, with respect to this matter. They, good honest souls, do not afford any encouragement to the idea of their fellow creatures becoming partakers of eternal life, on the ground of *conditions performed by them.* They may tell their friends or hearers, to be sure, that *they can only escape the wrath to come, on the terms of the gospel;* or that *it is only by possessing certain requisites, they can enjoy the divine favour;* or, that *it is only by coming to Christ and living to him, and persevering in his service, they can get to Heaven;* but who, except the merest caviller, would, on this account, venture to impute to them the idea of proposing to their hearers *conditional* views of eternal life? And is it possible for such persons to imagine, that any one enlightened by the word of God, can be imposed on by evasions so flimsy and transparent as these? The silly ostrich is said to bury her head in the sand, and, although the rest of her body remains exposed, to fancy herself safe from her pursuers: but who could have anticipated,

that grave divines, in the attempts which they have made to escape the charge of *conditionalizing* the gospel, would have been found to furnish a moral to the fable? But, alas! it is to be feared that there is as much bad faith, as folly, in the defence set up by these gentlemen. They must be aware that no change of terms can effect any change in the nature of things. That

> A rose
> By any other name will smell as sweet.

Mystification, however, happens to suit their purpose; and they have sufficient confidence in the credulity of mankind to fancy, that, by merely gilding over the delusion, they can prevail on them to swallow it. To say, in so many words, that eternal life was *conditionally bestowed*, would be perfectly shocking; not so however the declaration, that *we can only enjoy it, in the event of our having undergone some particular change, and being possessed of some particular qualifications!* And shall a Christian stand by, and witness such juggling practised upon his fellow men, without an attempt to undeceive them? No, certainly. Be it our part to strip off the disguise from these impostors, and to shew the gulls who compose so large a portion of the religious world, that *a condition* of eternal life, does not cease to be one, merely, because the man who would insinuate *the necessity of possesssing or performing it*, chooses, for reasons best known to himself, *to bestow upon it some other appellation.*

Now, in order to prove that Calvinism is self-consistent, and that the charge which I have brought against it is unfounded, all that is requisite is to shew, that it

never points the attention of its votaries to any thing, as *a source of good hope towards God*, except *the divine testimony concerning the person, work, and mediation of the Lord Jesus*. That, instead of exhorting them to look *inwardly*, with a view to discover in themselves the possession of qualifications, or the performance of conditions, it always points them *outwardly*, to the performance of all conditions by the Son of God, and to the fact of life everlasting flowing to us freely through him. If Calvinism does this, then, I do rejoice to admit that I have been mistaken; my hostility to the system and its supporters is at an end; and "God speed you" is to all who are engaged in promulgating it, the language, not of my lips merely, but of my inmost heart.

But who is the man acquainted with the Calvinistic system, that will venture to uphold it, on the ground of its withdrawing its votaries continually from self, and fixing them solely and continually upon Christ? That, in so many words, it maintains *the completeness of Christ's work*, and from time to time condemns every attempt to mix up the perfection of his atoning sacrifice *with conditions to be fulfilled by man*, is cheerfully admitted. But is it not likewise a fact, that with a view to satisfy themselves of their being believers, it exhorts its followers, from time to time, to examine into the evidences of their personal Christianity? That it reminds them of what it denominates a work of the Spirit requiring to be fulfilled *in them*, no less than the work of Christ performed *for them*, before they can inherit

everlasting life? That it encourages them to derive comfort as to their being believers in the Lord Jesus, not from the divine testimony alone, but from the discovery, real or fancied, in themselves, of certain qualifications: thereby, notwithstanding all its pretences of holding out an *unconditional* ground of hope towards God, inducing those, over whom it has influence, to take a *conditional* view of the subject? If this be the case, —and who that knows Calvinism will deny that it is so?—what more can be requisite to evince the thorough and incurable self-inconsistency of the Calvinistic system?

This, however, is not the worst of the matter. Calvinism not merely *conditionalizes men's views of eternal life*, but it is also chargeable with *hypocritically disclaiming that it does so.* Instead of pointing its votaries to *the work of Christ alone, as that from which, independently of every other consideration, their hopes of life everlasting must be derived;* it teaches them expressly, that *their hopes must be founded on that work, viewed in connection with another work, which must take place in themselves!* And yet, when remonstrated with on the unscriptural and dangerous nature of such a doctrine, its supporters will in all probability have the effrontery to turn round upon you and assert, that *it is upon the work of Christ alone they teach their hearers to rely!* It cannot be denied, that they teach their hearers, *the necessity of discovering in themselves the work of the Spirit, before they can have peace;* and yet, if you will credit these gentlemen, *this is not to teach*

the necessity of the work of the Spirit being a condition of eternal life! Can more barefaced hypocrisy be conceived than this? But *it is possible* that such language may be the result of consummate folly. *It is possible* that there may be understandings so constituted, as to be incapable of perceiving any discrepancy between the two injunctions, *see that you do not regard eternal life as conditionally bestowed;*—and *see that you do not regard it as bestowed in your own case, except in the event of your discovering yourselves to possess, or to have fulfilled, the terms, conditions, or qualifications, which alone entitle you, personally, to the enjoyment of it!* In other words, *eternal life comes to you, independently of your possessing or performing any conditions whatever;* and yet, *you cannot have eternal life, without possessing or performing the conditions, upon which alone it is to be bestowed!* I say, *it is possible,* that some minds may be unable to observe the gross and glaring discrepancy between the two statements. But whether *hypocritical,* or *unable,* or both, one thing is plain, that persons who after asserting *the gratuitousness of eternal life,* can afterwards represent *the discovery of the work of the Spirit in themselves, as necessary in order to their knowing that they have this exalted privilege,* lay themselves open to a cutting remark of the learned Owen, originally applied to some who, in his time, denounced the Popish and Arminian doctrine of *conditions of justification and eternal life.* "After this seeming gold," (of maintaining *the gratuitousness of justification*), "hath been cast for a while into the fire of disputation, *there*

comes out the calf of a personal inherent righteousness, whereby men are justified before God, *virtute foederis Evangelici;* for, *as for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed unto us, it is gone into heaven, and they know not what is become of it.*"*

But where, it may be asked, are your proofs of Calvinism thus *conditionalizing* the views of its supporters respecting eternal life.

In anticipation of this demand, it was my original purpose to have submitted to my readers a long list of quotations from the works of Calvin himself, and from those of several eminent divines belonging to the school of which he was the founder. This purpose, however, I have been induced to abandon. I am always unwilling to draw too largely upon the patience of my readers, and I am not without suspicions, that the length to which my quotations on the subject of *doubts and fears* have run out, may, in more than one case, have been felt to be tedious. Besides, some of the quotations already made, will appear, when examined, to be confirmatory of my present charge. See, for instance, the passage cited from the Confession of Faith, and that from Scott's Commentary. Under these circumstances, would I be justified in loading my pages with numerous extracts from the works of Calvinistic divines?

Something, however, in the shape of proof, is due to my readers. The charge which I have brought against Calvinism requires to be substantiated by some positive evidence.

* Owen *on justification*, p. 92. *ut supra.*

That a work of the Spirit *within us*, in addition to the work of Christ *without us*, is indispensable to our being able and warranted to cherish the hope of everlasting life, Calvin contends for in the third book of his Institutes. Our own personal right to the blessing, as included in the number of the elect, we are there represented as ascertaining, *from the internal work of the Spirit, manifested in our regeneration and effectual calling.** That is, stripped of all disguise, the discovery of a certain work having taken place in ourselves, is, according to Calvin, *the condition* on which our knowledge that life everlasting belongs to us, absolutely depends! But here, again, let me do justice to the eminent reformer of whom I am now speaking. Unscriptural as is the doctrine to which he has lent the sanction of his authority, it would have been well if the modesty and reserve with which he has stated the matter, and the anxiety which he has displayed to preserve untouched the glory of the Messiah's mediatorial undertaking, had been imitated by all those who profess to be his followers. While he insists on the necessity of *a work of the Spirit*, co-operating with *the work of Christ*, in order to *our participating in the blessings and benefits of the latter;* and of our judging of our election and personal interest in Christ, *from this work of the Spirit as it appears in our vocation;* he does so, as in the case of his language respecting doubts and

* Let me refer the reader, for a proof of this statement, to the Institutes, Book 3d, chapter 4th to chapter 10th, both inclusive. The passage is rather too long to be extracted.

fears, with much hesitation, with many qualifications and reservations, and with oft-repeated exhortations to keep our eyes fixed on Christ, *as he in whom alone the Father is well pleased.* The manner in which he has expressed himself, in the fifth section of the twenty-fourth chapter of his third book, is a striking proof of the correctness of this statement. But what, alas! avail all his precautions, in the teeth of the doctrine asserted by him, that *the discovery in ourselves of a work, over and above the work which Jesus finished on the cross, is necessary to our complete satisfaction that we have a personal interest in everlasting life!* Like *the dead fly in the apothecary's ointment,* this unfortunate doctrine of his, taints the whole mass of his own theology; and, adopted by his professed disciples, has been conceived by them to warrant those still wider deviations from the simplicity of the truth, with which many of them have been chargeable.

I have at the present moment lying before me, Toplady's works, already referred to. It is impossible to dispute the title of the Vicar of Broad-Hembury, to rank among the sturdiest and most devoted of Calvin's adherents. And yet, notwithstanding the many excellent points of Mr. Toplady's creed, how *conditional* the views of life everlasting which from time to time he inculcates. Turning over the pages of his third volume, I light upon the following passage, in which, all must admit, that the *conditionalizing* nature and tendencies of his own views, are strikingly depicted. "In secret prayer, in public worship, in reading the scriptures, in

sitting under the word preached, and in compassing the altar of the Lord, his saints catch some delightful glimpses of their Heavenly Father's countenance, *and lay up a stock of experiences and consolations for faith to feed upon afterwards, and in the strength of which they travel many days. Summer experiences, viewed in retrospective, are what the soul can sometimes reflect on with comfort, during the cold and darkness of wintry desertions: just as the pot of manna reserved in the ark, reminded Israel of the months and years that were past, and remained as a token for good, long after God had ceased to rain on his people the bread of Heaven, and to feed them with angels' food.*" Life a Journey. Sermon on Gen. xii. 5. Toplady's works, vol. 3d, p. 337. Thus, you observe, *faith*, which in scripture is spoken of as conversant with and feeding on *God's own testimony*, is here represented as condescending to feed on, and derive strength from, *the garbage of personal experiences.* In other words, the work of the Spirit on our minds, observed and ascertained by us, is *conditionally* a means of strengthening our hopes of life everlasting! How awfully unscriptural!

But I must limit my list of proofs. Were I to adduce all that come in my way, I might never have done. With a view, then, to save myself and my readers farther trouble, let me again call on Dr. Barr to be so obliging as to become the voucher for the correctness of my statement. Backed, supported, and commended, as that gentleman is, by his brethren of the Scottish established church, we may be certain that in listening

to him, we listen to the spokesman of a large and respectable body of persons professing the Calvinistic creed. "We must beware," says the Dr., "of separating the work of Christ *for his people* in the flesh, from his work *in them* by the Spirit." And why? He himself shall furnish us with the answer. Because "'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,'—*in the language of the Spirit's operations, in the application of the seal of the Spirit, producing upon the character a visible impression of the moral image of God, infusing into the soul a principle of pure and holy love to God, awakening a feeling of delight in the law, and a spirit of devotedness to the service of God. He thus——by sensible evidence, imparts the comfort of actual reconciliation, &c.* Again: "The message of salvation addresses mankind indiscriminately as sinners; every individual may, therefore, on the authority of the offer thus made to him, receive and appropriate" (?) "the benefits which it sets before him; BUT HE CAN HAVE NO WARRANT TO CONSIDER HIMSELF IN PERSONAL POSSESSION OF THESE BLESSINGS, UNTIL HE HAS FOUND THE EVIDENCE IN HIMSELF OF HAVING ACCEPTED THE OFFER AND BELIEVED THE MESSAGE."* And now, reader, will this satisfy

* The whole of the passage from which these extracts have been taken, is so curious a specimen of what may be denominated modern Pharisaism, (see Rom. x. 3), that I almost anticipate the thanks of my readers for presenting it to them at full length. "'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God:' and this testimony is conveyed not *in the form of some extraordinary illumination*," (see Mat. xvi. 17. John vi. 44, 45. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Eph. i. 17, 18, ii. 8, &c.) "revealing to the individual the important secret of *his* elec-

you? Here, you observe, there is no mincing of the matter. You are informed by a minister of the

tion to eternal life," (see 1 John v. 11, 19, 20, &c.) "but in the language of the Spirit's operations, in the application of the seal of the Spirit, producing upon the character a visible impression of the moral image of God, infusing into the soul a principle of pure and holy love to God, awakening a feeling of delight in the law and a spirit of devotedness to the service of God. He" (that is the Spirit) "*thus*" (not by his testimony in the word) "*makes known to believers their interest in the divine favour by sensible evidence, imparts the comfort of actual reconciliation, realizes the experimental possession of spiritual blessings, and causes the peace of God to rule in the heart, and keep the mind through Jesus Christ.*" (The phrase "through Jesus Christ" being here introduced, like "your obedient humble servant" at the end of a letter, merely to round and complete the sentence, as, according to the context, it is "through the sensible evidence" &c., that the peace rules the heart and keeps the mind). "The fruit of the Spirit is peace. Whether it is felt in looking simply to the work of Christ immediately upon his first acquaintance with the gospel revelation," (and what other or better source of peace than the work of Christ can he desire), "*or is obtained by subsequently observing the moral change that has been wrought in himself by the operation of divine truth and grace,*" (let the reader mark well, in this statement, the working of the Pharisaical leaven), "the peace of the believer is the fruit of the Spirit, who not only begins the work but performs it unto the day of Christ." (Let me entreat the reader likewise to mark well what follows, for in it we have the essence of the modern unscriptural doctrine). "In the first instance, however," (that is from the revelation of the work of Christ itself), "his peace consists *merely in a spirit of humble dependence connected with the encouraging hope of deliverance*;" (language, *the spirit of which* at least is intelligible enough); "but *when matured by experience, and exemplified in purity and spirituality of character,* IT RISES PROGRESSIVELY INTO A FEELING OF CONSCIOUS SECURITY, UNDER A SENSE OF DELIVERANCE ACTUALLY OBTAINED." (That is, to this fancied work of the *Spirit in us,* is ascribed the honour of producing an effect, which cannot be produced by *the work of Christ itself revealed to us*). "The message of salvation addresses mankind *indiscriminately* as sinners;" (by the way, it addresses those only *who have ears to hear it*); "every individual may, therefore, on the authority of the offer made to him, receive and appropriate the benefits" (?) "which it sets before him; but HE CAN HAVE NO WARRANT TO CONSIDER HIMSELF IN PERSONAL POSSESSION OF THESE BLESSINGS, UNTIL HE HAS FOUND THE EVIDENCE IN HIMSELF OF HAVING ACCEPTED THE OFFER, AND BELIEVED THE MESSAGE!" Barr's Peace of Believing, page 8.

Calvinistic Church of Scotland, in the broadest, the most explicit, and the most unequivocal terms, that, so far from the blood of Christ *of itself*, and *exclusive of every other consideration*, being able to impart to you *the certainty of everlasting life*, your only warrant to consider yourself interested in gospel blessings, *is the supposed discovery that certain changes and operations have taken place in yourself!* What think you of the glory of *speaking peace to the conscience*, being thus transferred from *the work and revealed character of the Creator*, to *an operation or series of operations supposed to have taken place in the creature!* You see clearly, that, according to Dr. Barr, it is not *Christ's work*, but *a work supposed to have been performed in self*, that after all inspires the mind with good hope towards God. And will you, after this, if possessed of the slenderest *modicum* of the reasoning faculty, venture to maintain, that a system, which thus absolutely constrains its votaries to look to *self*, for that peace and comfort respecting futurity, which scripture informs us is to be found solely *in the revealed character of God*, does not tend to *conditionalize* their views of the subject?

"What, however," some will eagerly exclaim, "is that work or operation of the Spirit, by instructing its votaries to rely on which, as the only evidence of *a personal interest* in the Redeemer, Calvinism contrives to *conditionalize* their views respecting eternal life?" To this I answer, the work of the Spirit is commonly supposed to be divided into three parts, or to take place at three different times.

1st. A work or operation *previous to conversion.* This, according to them, consists in the Spirit's convincing of sin. The person brought under this work, is enabled to see and acknowledge that he is a guilty creature—that he has violated God's statutes and ordinances, times and ways without number—and that he might, without the slightest imputation on the divine justice and mercy, (?) have been consigned over to everlasting torments! While in this state he generally engages in many attempts to establish his own righteousness; but being foiled in them all, and being agitated by the most disquieting fears and gloomy forebodings on this account, he is at last, after reiterated failures, *prepared for betaking himself to the Saviour.* This, by Calvinists, is considered the first act of the spiritual drama; and will be found accurately and pleasingly delineated, in the adventures which Bunyan represents his pilgrims as meeting with, before they obtain a sight of the cross, and particularly before they reach the wicket gate.

2dly. There is a work or operation of the Spirit *at the time of conversion.* The Spirit then *enables* the self-convicted and self-condemned sinner to *put forth an act of faith!* (Acts of faith, in scripture, are, not *faith itself viewed as an act or series of acts,* but *acts springing from faith, as a principle already existing*). This, according to Calvinists, is an exceedingly great and mysterious operation, scarcely to be understood by those who have themselves been the subjects of it, and incapable of being fully described even by those who have

made it their study! The sinner, who up to this time had been *dead in trespasses and sins,* (language which, *as employed by Calvinists,* it is impossible to reconcile with the idea of the person having been already under the guidance and operation of that Spirit, *all* whose influences are, *even by their own shewing, quickening or life giving*), I say, the sinner is *now* made spiritually alive, and in obedience to the gospel call, and in token of his acceptance of the blessings proffered to him, *exerts the act of mind* called by them *believing.* (Scripture represents belief as being, not *man's act,* but *God's gift.* Eph. ii. 8). By this belief *he appropriates to himself Christ and all his benefits.* (According to scripture, it is *Christ who appropriates us to him,* not *we who appropriate Christ to us;* perhaps not a very material difference in the eyes of a Calvinist, although a rather important one in the estimation of a child of God). This spiritual operation is like the former, regarded by Calvinists as indispensable to a personal interest in Christ, and paves the way for

3dly, The last work or operation of the Spirit, which is *subsequent to conversion.* This consists in the communication to the individual of a new heart and a right spirit; (by the by, a most grievous perversion of scripture; seeing that in the passage alluded to, Psalm li. 10, the Messiah, who is the speaker, is contrasting with the impure heart and the depraved mind of *the first Adam,* the pure heart and the right spirit, which God should create in him *the second Adam*); or, what is commonly called the sanctifying influence of the Spirit.

The assent of the understanding to the truth of the gospel, or the conviction of the mind that God's testimony concerning Jesus is true, is, according to the Calvinistic scheme, of itself worth nothing. There must be likewise a change of heart. (As if the understanding of *the truth as it is in Jesus* were not a change of heart or mind). To urge upon their hearers the necessity of this change, and the necessity of discovering it in themselves, in order to their having a personal hope towards God; and farther, to threaten them with the most awful consequences, in the event of their coming short of it; are some of the favourite exercises of the popular preachers. The necessity of knowing that this sanctifying process has taken place in themselves, if they would acquire, or know that they possess, an interest in Christ, (to the complete exclusion of the fact, that in Christ himself believers have *sanctification*, as well as every other spiritual blessing, 1 Cor. i. 30), is the principal bait by which our modern *fishers of men*, contrive to keep in play the religious gudgeons, which are always lying in shoals at *the pool of ordinances;* and it is in the dexterity with which they manage this bait, that the more highly-gifted part of them, are found to excel their less talented brethren.

Such, according to Dr. Barr and his coadjutors, are those operations of the Spirit, the discovery of which in ourselves alone warrants us in concluding, that eternal life belongs to ourselves personally. In other words, *the condition* of our having any right *to suppose* that eternal life is ours, is, to use a phrase which at one time

was constantly in the mouths of the Calvinistic clergy, *the Spirit condescending to shine upon his own work and graces in our hearts.* We who believe the truth, on the other hand, are content to derive *the absolute certainty of everlasting life in our own case,* solely and exclusively, *from the Spirit shining upon, and thereby discovering to us, the work and grace of Christ.*

In reasoning as if *the requisites* or *conditions,* upon which Calvinists lay so much stress, were the work of the Spirit, I have conceded too much to them. I have not done justice to my own argument. I have actually assigned to these *requisites* or *conditions,* a much more dignified origin, than Calvinists themselves often do. To judge of the sentiments entertained by the popular divines, from the practical exhortations which *always* form a part of their sermons, and *frequently* of the other religious works which they give to the public, one would be tempted to think, that, notwithstanding their oft-repeated disclaimers, *convictions of sin, the actings of faith, and the process of sanctification,* were, in their opinion, attainable, either in whole or in part, by the self-prompted and self-originated efforts of the creature. On what other principle, if I am to take men's words as an index of their meaning, am I to account for most of the practical exhortations contained in Watt's *Sermons,* Doddridge's *Rise and Progress,* Marshall *on Sanctification, the Marrow of Modern Divinity,* Boston's *Fourfold State,* and hosts of other works which are favourites with the million? Were it not that I am afraid of swelling the size of this essay beyond all

reasonable bounds, I could adduce innumerable passages in proof of what I am now stating. But passing over the works of individuals, let any person who has doubts respecting the accuracy of my present statement, do me the favour to look at the language of the 85th question of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism,—a compilation which is put into the hands of almost every child in Scotland, and which is held in high repute among the Calvinistic dissenters in England. After having read the question, and the answer which is returned to it, let the person to whom I make this appeal candidly say, if any other construction can be put upon the words of both than this, that, according to the views of the Assembly, the work of Christ *of itself* cannot rescue us from perishing and bring us to God; and that, therefore, in order to its becoming effectual, *it must be seconded and followed up by certain efforts and performances of our own!* "Q. What doth God require of us," (not, require of us *assisted by the Spirit*, as it is sometimes *rather more modestly* expressed, but, simply, *what doth He require of us,*) "that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for sin?" Now, seeing that, according to other parts of the same catechism, Christ has accomplished *all* that was necessary for our salvation, is the answer to the question, as it ought to be, *He requires of us nothing for this purpose?* Oh no; consistency with themselves, even, was not to be regarded when the credit of a favourite system was at stake; and therefore the catechumen is made to answer, that *God*

requires of us, what elsewhere the Assembly has declared that *He bestows upon us*. "A. To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God *requireth of us* faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, and the diligent use of all the outward means, whereby *Christ communicateth to us*" (!) "the benefits of redemption." Like the hero of the eastern tale, the Assembly has thus contrived, by one unlucky kick, to overturn all its previously well-devised and well-expressed statements, respecting the completeness of Christ's work. But, truly, the church of Scotland, which has adopted the Westminster Shorter Catechism as a part of her standards, is not singular in this inconsistency of hers; for the sister church of England, in the obligation which she imposes upon godfathers and godmothers, in the administration of the rite of baptism, compels them, on behalf of the child, to undertake that when he attains to years of discretion *he shall perform a work*, which elsewhere she has declared to be *the work of God himself!* "Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the Devil and all his works," &c. Here we have *the creature* called upon to promise, and that too not for himself but for another, that that other shall perform *the acknowledged work of the Creator!* Any person who may be desirous to satisfy himself farther, with as little trouble as possible, respecting the fact of Calvinists, but too frequently representing man himself as called on to perform certain conditions of salvation,—but too frequently using language, calculated to impress upon the creature, the necessity of making the first advances

towards the Creator,—will find numerous quotations from the popular divines, in proof of this, ready made to his hands, in Sandeman's *letters*, and Barclay's *assurance of faith vindicated.* I would particularly direct his attention to the quotation in the latter, beginning, "Will ye do nothing for yourselves ere ye be damned," &c.,* as containing not merely the *spirit*, but even the *ipsissima verba*, of exhortations frequently delivered from Calvinistic pulpits. And yet, when pointing my readers to this gross and undisguised method of contradicting the gospel, can I abstain from suggesting to them, that there are ways of accomplishing the same object, somewhat more subtle and refined, but equally certain and efficacious. Are we not accustomed to hear exhortations to pray, to read the scriptures, to abandon the paths of iniquity, and to perform a variety of other duties, which by God himself are addressed *to his believing people*, addressed by those who pretend to be his ambassadors, to persons *who avowedly do not believe the gospel?*† Now, has it never struck intelligent individuals, as one of the numerous objections to which this practice is liable, that it leads poor, ignorant, sinful creatures to fancy, both a power in themselves to comply with such exhortations, and, in the event of their compliance, the acquisition by them thereby of a claim upon the divine favour: a state of mind, by which *the blood of Christ*, through which alone the sinner can be

* Page 20, edition 1825.

† How inconsistent this practice with such passages of scripture, as Rom. x. 3, 4, 8—10, 14. Heb. xi. 6, &c.

brought nigh to God, is necessarily intercepted altogether from their view?

Let me, however, for the sake of argument, waive any advantage, which I might derive from such exhortations of Calvinists, as seem to proceed on the principle of man himself being called upon, and being able to perform certain *conditions* of salvation; and let me suppose, that the *conditions* to be possessed and performed, are alleged to be the work not *of ourselves*, but of the Spirit operating *within us* and *by us*. Why how, even in this way, is the case of these gentlemen bettered? On their own shewing, certain operations of the Spirit, as they are pleased to denominate them, are indispensable to salvation; and the discovery of these operations having taken place in ourselves, is indispensable to our own personal hope towards God. What is this, but just in other words to declare, that no person is entitled to take comfort to himself, respecting his own future enjoyment of eternal life, except *conditionally;* and is not this enough to substantiate the charge which I have brought against Calvinism, that it tends necessarily to *conditionalize* men's views of eternal life? That it places an insurmountable obstacle, in the way of its votaries regarding that inestimably glorious privilege as *the gift of God?* If none have a right to suppose that they shall enjoy God for ever in a future state, unless they shall have ascertained that they have been suitably convinced of sin,—that they have been enabled to act faith in Christ,—and that they have been subjected to the sanctifying influence of the Spirit;—and if the degree in

which they have a right to look forward to this blessed termination of their present trials and sufferings, is just the degree in which they have reason to believe their Christian experience to be genuine, as our Calvinistic friends assert;—is it possible for the most brazen-faced impudence to deny, that this is to represent them as taking *a conditional view* of the manner, in which everlasting life is to be attained to? How any man endowed with ordinary understanding, can be expecting eternal life for himself, and can be instructing others to expect that privilege, *on condition* of his and their possessing, and discovering that they possess, certain qualifications,—and yet, at the same time, can be expecting, and can be teaching others to expect the enjoyment of the privilege *unconditionally*,—is more, I confess, than I can comprehend.

It is in vain to attempt to put aside the force of this argument by alleging, that the same Spirit which bears witness *in the scriptures*, bears witness likewise *in us to our fulfilment of the supposed conditions*. For, who is so ignorant or inattentive as not to perceive, that for a Calvinist to reason in this way, is still to admit, in its fullest extent, the charge which I have brought against his system, of constraining its votaries to regard eternal life as bestowed on them *conditionally*? There may, to be sure, be an effort made to get rid of this, too, by turning upon me and saying, that, on the very same principle, the man who looks for salvation through the blood of Christ, may be charged with expecting it *conditionally*: but, not to repeat observations already made

touching this point, let me merely suggest, that there is one very obvious and material difference between deriving our hopes of eternal life from *the blood of Christ alone*, and deriving them from *fancied operations of the Spirit within ourselves;* that, in the former case, our hopes rest upon a work *finished eighteen hundred years ago*;* whereas, in the latter case, they rest upon operations *not yet terminated*, nay, *which can only terminate with our lives!* † But passing over the fact, that he who contends for the Spirit bearing witness *in us to the fulfilment on our part of the conditions of everlasting life*, necessarily admits *the conditionality of the views of believers respecting their own personal enjoyment of the privilege*, the argument lies open to objections of another kind, which are equally subversive of and fatal to it. In the first place, it is not true that the Spirit of God bears witness to the conscience *now*, in any way, except *through the medium of the written word. The words that I speak unto you*,—which are now contained in the scriptures, the only authentic record of the words of Christ,—*they are Spirit.* John vi. 63. Nay, so careful are the inspired writers, to guard us against the idea of the Spirit of God bearing testimony otherwise than through the written word, that in a well-known and remarkable passage, Rom. viii. 16, it is expressly suggested, that the witnessing of our spirits to the fact of our personal interest in the Messiah, is neither more nor less, than the understanding of what the Spirit

* Consequently, no longer conditional and contingent.

† Consequently, still conditional and contingent.

of God, speaking in the scriptures, has declared. *The Spirit itself* speaking in and by the word, *beareth witness with our spirit* understanding that word, *that we are the children of God.* Any man, then, who may be disposed to assert, that the Spirit of God does bear witness otherwise than through the word, is hereby challenged to the proof. In the second place, it is not true, that a single assertion can be produced from the sacred volume, warranting the notion of the Spirit bearing witness to the fulfilment of conditions of eternal life *in us*, or to the performance of such conditions *by us.* It must be obvious, that were the Spirit to bear witness *concerning his own residence and operations in the mind*, he would bear witness *concerning himself.* So far, however, from this being the office assigned to the Spirit in scripture, we have the highest of all authority for asserting, that when he came, he was to make it his business to glorify Christ, by bearing witness *concerning him.* John xvi. 13. Instead of the Spirit taking of his own things, and shewing them to Christ's disciples, —which he would do were he to bear testimony to the existence and extent of his own operations,—it was to be characteristic of him that *he should not speak of himself*, but that *he should take of the things that were Christ's, and shew these unto them.* If, then, *according to the scriptures themselves*, it is the express office of the Spirit, *speaking in these scriptures*, and through them *speaking to us*, to bear testimony, not to the necessity of the fulfilment of any conditions of eternal life *in us*, or to the actual possession of any requisites of eternal

life *by us*, but to the fulfilment of all conditions, and the possession of all requisites, by the Lord Jesus on our behalf; can more daring impiety, can more flagrant contradiction of the word of God be conceived, than to represent Him, whose divine prerogative thus it is *to reveal to us eternal life flowing unconditionally through Christ*, as engaged, on the contrary, in revealing to us, *that we can only attain to that privilege, on condition of our possessing certain qualifications of our own!* When we consider the amazing number of theological works, which have been composed on the avowed principle, of its being the business of the Spirit *to bear witness to*, not *Christ's work*, but *his own operations in the mind*,—how astonishing to think, that learned and talented men should have engaged, as it were, in an unholy alliance, to represent *the Spirit of truth*, as *contradicting his own record, and setting his seal to a lie!*

But, it may be, that even yet I am not understood. If so, perhaps the shortest, simplest, and most efficacious method, of conveying to my readers an idea of the thorough *conditionality* of the views respecting everlasting life entertained by Calvinistic divines, will be to state, and briefly illustrate, the two following positions.

First. Although Calvinists profess, in so many words, to regard the Messiah as having fulfilled *all the conditions of everlasting life*, they nevertheless continue to manifest their own profound ignorance of the subject, and of the meaning of the terms which they employ, by representing *a number of conditions as requiring to be fulfilled in or by us, before we can have and can*

know ourselves to have, a personal interest in the heavenly gift. They thus turn away the eyes of their votaries from the glory of the Creator, which shines forth only in *the finished work of his Son;* and send them to grope amidst the dark and deceitful labyrinths of their own hearts, *for something, by the addition of which to that work,* IT MAY BECOME A FINISHED WORK TO THEM! How gross the absurdity! And yet, what is worse, how awful the delusion! The work of Christ, these poor besotted creatures are told, cannot *of itself* satisfy their consciences, or inspire them with a well-grounded personal hope of everlasting life; and, therefore, they are taught to seek for, or to perform something of their own, that *the work of Christ in their case may be rendered effectual!* Need we be surprised if, as the result of this, we find it to hold true of Calvinists and their infatuated followers, that *the way of peace they have not known.* Expecting to receive that *conditionally,* which God has declared He bestows *unconditionally,* what else can happen, than that they should spend their days upon earth in doubts and fears respecting their final destiny, and that at last they should lie down in despair? But this is not all, for

Secondly, Calvinism, not satisfied with insisting on the necessity of its votaries discovering in themselves, certain qualifications and requisites, as *the condition* of their being able to cherish personally the hope of everlasting life, has contrived to *conditionalize* their views of the subject still farther, by insisting on it as *an additional condition* of their being able to

cherish this hope, that *the Spirit of God shall bear testimony in their consciences, to the fact of the other conditions of eternal life having been fulfilled in them!* That is, as if the obligation which it imposes upon men, of endeavouring to ascertain from a long and painful examination of their own minds, that they possess the marks and evidences of their being Christians, were not of itself sufficiently puzzling, and sufficiently destructive of the possibility of any thing like settled peace being attained to,—there must also be imposed upon them the still more puzzling obligation, of endeavouring to ascertain that any conviction which they may have of their possessing these marks and evidences, does not spring *from themselves,* but *from the Spirit of God!* They must know, first of all, that they possess certain marks and evidences; and they must know, in the second place, that it is the Spirit of God which is informing them that they possess these marks and evidences, before they can have any title to take to themselves the comfort of having a personal interest in eternal life! And is not this to *conditionalize* men's views of eternal life with a vengeance? After discovering the number and strength of the meshes of delusion, in which the minds of poor ignorant Calvinists are thus entangled, it is really matter of surprise, that any should ever be enabled to burst through them, and to become partakers of *that liberty, wherewith Christ maketh his followers free.* How simple is the gospel *in itself.* A declaration of *what God is,* which, the moment it is understood, *at once, certainly, and for ever, discharges*



the conscience from guilt. A declaration of *what God is,* which, the moment it is understood, inspires the individual understanding it, *with the absolute and infallible certainty of eternal life in his own case.* But, how ambiguous, incomprehensible, and self-inconsistent, the various misrepresentations of the gospel given by religious professors, and by Calvinists among the rest. It is according to them a declaration of *what God may be,* on condition of *our possessing certain qualifications,* and on condition of *the Spirit of God shewing us that we possess them!* That is, the Spirit of God, who, speaking in the scriptures, declares *all the conditions of everlasting life to have been fulfilled by the Messiah,* has it, if Calvinists are to be credited, for a part of his office to testify, that *certain other conditions of everlasting life have been fulfilled, or are fulfilling, by himself in us!* The Spirit of God, in their opinion, thus realizing the jest, of treating in the scriptures *de omnibus rebus,* and in the minds of men, *de quibusdam aliis!* Is it surprising, if those who thus pay the Spirit of truth the delicate compliment of being inconsistent with himself,—if those who thus venture to ascribe to divine wisdom, what they would be ashamed to ascribe to human folly,—should, to use a favourite phrase of their own, borrowed from scripture but grossly misapplied, *go mourning without the sun?* Having not merely forged to themselves *conditions* of everlasting life, which the Holy Ghost utterly disapproves of and condemns; but having added to this, the blasphemy of representing it to be a still farther *condition* of everlasting

life, that the Holy Ghost shall bear witness in their hearts to the fulfilment of these forged *conditions;* what can be conceived to be a more appropriate recompense of such conduct, than that those who are chargeable with it, being filled with doubts, and fears, and gloomy forebodings, should at last be consigned over to *the blackness of darkness for ever ?**

I feel that I should not do justice to myself, or to the cause which I advocate, were I to dismiss the subject of *spiritual operations,* without offering a few remarks in explanation of my sentiments respecting it. I have opposed both publicly and privately, and while I have breath,

Dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus,

I must, as a believer of the gospel, continue to oppose, the crude and unscriptural notions which ordinarily

* It is a curious fact, that Calvinistic divines, however confident on some occasions they may appear to be, respecting the work of the Holy Spirit in their own hearts, and his bearing testimony to the reality of this work *by shining upon his own graces,* as the phrase is, are at bottom as sceptical respecting this, as they are respecting every other point in religion. This is clear when we consider the number of works that have been written by them, for the express and avowed purpose, of enabling their followers to distinguish betwten *genuine* and *spurious* spiritual operations; a matter, which, if satisfied of certain operations being spiritual, they might with all safety have left to the Spirit himself by means of these to accomplish. What, even on their own principles, is the celebrated work of President Edwards, on *religious affections,* but a modest insinuation of the inability of the Spirit to manifest his own operations; and of the necessity, therefore, of his receiving assistance from man in the attainment of his object? It is no ways surprising, however, to find those, who have first ventured to charge the Holy Ghost with *falsehood,* by representing him as bearing witness in the minds of men to his own operations, in opposition to his recorded testimony that it is his office to bear witness concerning Christ, afterwards charging him with *weakness and incompetency,* by writing tracts for the express purpose of enabling men to find out when they are the subjects of his divine operations! So much for human folly.

prevail, in reference to this matter. The Spirit does not operate on the mind, in a number of different ways. On the contrary, the manner of His operation is one and simple. His sole office is *to speak in the scriptures*, and through them *to the consciences of those to whom it is given to understand their meaning*. In the scriptures *He bears testimony to Christ, and to the character of God as it is revealed in Christ*; and in the consciences of believers *He bears the same testimony, by imparting to them the understanding of what is already written*. This being the case, how absurd the idea of *the Spirit's convincing men of sin*, previous to his communicating to them *the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus!* To suppose him thus to act, as almost all Calvinists do, is, in the first place, to suppose him *to have other functions to discharge besides testifying to Christ*, in opposition to his own record; and is, in the second place, to suppose him *to enlighten the mind, without revealing to it the character of Christ Jesus, the only means of spiritual illumination!* John i. 4, &c. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Eph. v. 13. The various absurdities which have been broached by theologians respecting this subject, spring from their not having understood, that all the notions of evil, entertained by men previous to the belief of the truth, have no concern, properly speaking, with *spiritual operations*, but result from *the workings of natural conscience*, Rom. ii. 13—15; and that the very first real and scriptural, and, consequently, spiritual view of the nature of sin, which any man has or can have, comes to him directly through the

manifestation to his conscience, of the dignity and character of that personage by whom sin has been taken away. Rom. vii. 12, *to the end.* It is only in the light of the same truth which reveals to him *how sin has been atoned for,* that he is capable of perceiving *what in reality sin is.* Again, it is not a work or operation of the Spirit to enable any man *to act faith upon Christ,* or *to appropriate Christ with all his benefits to himself;* but it is the work of the Spirit, through the medium of the truth concerning Christ contained in the scriptures, to shine into a man's mind; and thereby to impart to him the knowledge and conviction of a subject, of which he was formerly ignorant: the mind of the person at the moment of receiving this knowledge and conviction, being as thoroughly *passive,* as he himself was in the reception of natural existence. 2 Cor. iv. 6. James i. 18. And, in the last place, it is not an operation of the Spirit to communicate to the believer *a new heart, as something distinguished from the principle of faith itself,* for *the understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus,* is *the only new heart and right Spirit,* (if we must so apply the words), which any Christian does or can possess. Rom. viii. 1—9. The enlightening of the believer's mind, is not a stepping-stone or preliminary to spiritual operations of some other and still more important kind, as Methodists, Calvinists, and all who are ignorant of the truth imagine; but the enlightening of his mind, gradually advancing as the truth is more and more opened up to him, is *the only spiritual operation* which he undergoes.

True, the knowledge of the gospel possessed by him, in proportion to its extent, *controls, restrains, subdues,* and *crucifies* in him, the various principles and propensities of human nature; but, in the first place, this knowledge of the gospel is not accompanied in him with *any change* in these principles and propensities themselves, human nature in him continuing exactly what it is in every other descendant of Adam; and, in the second place, it is not, *in any respect whatever, from this controlling and crucifying influence of the truth,* but *from the truth itself,* that his certain and infallible confidence continues exclusively to be derived. Such, then, is the simplicity of the Spirit's work. As described in the sacred record, it is not threefold, or manifold, but one. It is from first to last, merely the manifestation to the conscience of the character of Jesus, and of the character of God as revealed in him; and this through the medium of the written word. But *to know God, and his Son Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,*—the work of the Spirit,—is not the furnishing of the mind with a principle, valuable only as being the foundation, upon which, rearing a superstructure of self righteousness and meritorious obedience of our own, we may entitle ourselves to eternal life. No; we do not believe *that we may have,* but believing *we have eternal life.* It is in this way, that there is no *conditionality* in the Spirit's operation. When he opens the eyes of our understandings, it is to see, not *conditions required,* but *conditions fulfilled.* He points out to us Christ, not *as he who is to be our assistant, in procuring or performing what may entitle us to the*

divine favour, but *as he, in consequence of our inseparable union with whom, the Father even now cherishes towards us, a love of the most intense and unchangeable description*, 1 John iv. 8, 9, 10. The Spirit's work, therefore, so far from leading us to conceive of any conditions of everlasting life as requiring to be fulfilled *by us* or *in us*, or of the discovery of such conditions as being in any respect whatever indispensable to our peace and comfort, shews us all conditions superseded by the perfect obedience of the Son of God; and gives us, consequently, to see ourselves, *by being one with Christ*, as even already *in the certain and indefeasible possession of everlasting life. This is the record*, to which he bears testimony in our consciences, *that God* HATH GIVEN *to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* 1 John v. 11

The reader is, I hope, by this time satisfied, that I have not brought a groundless charge against the Calvinistic system. I have asserted that it leads, nay, constrains its votaries, to regard eternal life as a blessing which is *conditionally bestowed;* and I have proved my assertion, both by the language which it uses and sanctions *respecting doubts and fears*, and likewise by its insisting *on the necessity of our discovering certain changes and operations to have taken place in ourselves*, before we can be warranted to expect with confidence the enjoyment of eternal life personally. How, consistently with candour and fair dealing, can my premises be questioned, or the conclusion which I have drawn from them be confuted? I have admitted the general

excellence of Calvinism as a system. I have admitted, that as it appears in the works of its great founder, it is not so decidedly and undisguisedly opposed to truth, as many of its professed supporters have since contrived to render it: but have I not succeeded in shewing, that even in its best and most palmy state, it is deplorably inconsistent with itself? That by leading to the supposition of the Spirit *performing some other work in us*, besides simply *manifesting to us the finished work of Christ*, it is chargeable with having opened the floodgates to all those false and unscriptural views of the subject, by which the professing Church of Christ has since been inundated? While, then, I admit it to be in the writings of the puritanical divines, that Calvinism is seen to be thoroughly and incurably corrupt, let me never forget, that its founder, by allowing that believers *ought to be*, instead of maintaining that they *are* certain of possessing eternal life,* was himself indirectly the author of all the evils which have followed. Let not Calvinists "lay the flattering unction to their souls," that because they may not, like the followers of the Arminian Wesley, be openly maintaining it to be in the power of men to come to Christ, and may not be urging them to take the initiative in the work of salvation, they are not, therefore, holding conditional views of divine things; for let them be reminded, that by insisting on the necessity of believers knowing themselves to possess spiritual and experimental views of religion, and new and gracious dispositions of heart, *before they can*

* Rom. v. 1, viii. 16. Gal. ii, 20. 1 John v. 11, 19, 20, &c.

be certain of possessing a personal interest in the Messiah, they are as decidedly *conditionalizing* the gospel, as any of those can do whose sentiments they condemn.

Here it may be alleged, that however much Calvinism, as it appears in the pages of its founder, may be chargeable with *conditionaliziny* the gospel, it is possible so to modify it, as to render it in its general statements and bearings consistent with itself, and with the sacred volume. The best way to prove that, except on the principles and in the manner afterwards to be developed, it cannot be rendered self-consistent, will be to consider two or three of the leading systems, which, agreeing with it in the main, have been propounded as improvements upon it. This I have already undertaken to do, and this, with a view to the perfection of my present inquiry, I now proceed to accomplish.

It is, of course, understood by my readers, that I am speaking of Calvinism only in so far as it professes to present a ground of hope to the conscience, or in so far as it professes to instruct individuals concerning the way of ascertaining their own personal interest in life everlasting. With the other features by which as a system of religion it is distinguished, I have at present nothing to do. But even in regard to the particular topic to which I restrict myself, it would be impossible, within the limits of a work like this, to take notice of all the shades and modifications of opinion, which have prevailed among Calvinists. Nor, indeed, is this

necessary; for the principal differences are so broadly marked, as to be easily and clearly distinguishable, and capable of being reduced to a very few heads. The following classification will, (always excepting that with which I agree, and which I am afterwards at some length to insist upon), be found to embrace the whole of them. First, the scheme of appropriation; secondly, that maintained by Sandeman; and, thirdly, that of modified or semi-Sandemanianism. Let me consider these different schemes in the order in which I have now enumerated them, which is also the order of their appearance in point of time.

§ 1. The scheme of appropriation.

This scheme, like a number of others, owed its origin to the spirit of religious inquiry, which sprang up and was fostered in England, during the era of Charles I. and the commonwealth. It was originally introduced to public notice in the year 1646, in a work entitled "The Marrow of Modern Divinity." The object of Mr. Fisher, the author of this work, (which consists of a series of dialogues), was not to broach a novel system of his own, but to set forth, with as much relief and prominency as possible, what he conceived to be the leading doctrines of the reformation divines. It appeared to him, that as early even as his own time, a marked deviation from the simplicity of divine truth had begun to take place; and he could devise nothing so likely to stop this alarming career of defection, as directing the attention of men to those views of religion, by which

the triumphs of the early reformers had been achieved. His work,—after having lain neglected, and almost unknown, for about eighty years,—was, from motives similar to those which induced its original publication, republished early in the course of last century, with notes from the pen of Mr. Boston of Ettrick, already alluded to. The views which it contains will be found amply developed in the writings of Mr. Boston, Messrs. Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, and the other persons, who are commonly known among British divines, by the appellation of "the marrow men." The celebrated James Hervey, from the general strain of his works, and especially from his *dialogues of Theron and Aspasio*, seems, in a great measure, to have adopted these views. It may be interesting to mention, that certain leading propositions extracted from "the marrow," were formally condemned by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1720, and 1722.

But although I have every reason to think, that the introduction of a new system was not contemplated by the author of "the marrow," it has so happened, that, from the prominency which he gives to one particular point, viz., *the necessity of our performing the appropriating act of faith*, a system to a certain degree new, is advocated in that work. Perhaps the fairest way of dealing with the author and my readers, is to present the subject to the latter, in the exact words of the former. "I beseech you consider," says Mr. Fisher, in the person of Evangelista, "that God the Father, as he is in his Son Jesus Christ, moved with nothing but

with his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant *unto them all*, that whosoever of them all shall believe in this his Son, *shall not perish, but have eternal life.* And hence it was, that Jesus Christ himself said unto his disciples, Mark xvi. 15, *Go and preach the gospel to every creature under Heaven:* that is, go and tell every man without exception, that here is good news for him; Christ is dead for him; and *if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness,*" (!) "*he shall have him.* Therefore, saith a godly writer, *forasmuch as the holy scripture speaketh to all in general, none of us ought to distrust himself, but believe that it doth belong particularly to himself.*" Edin. 1745. Page 168. Mr. Culverwell, Dr. Preston, and others, are quoted as his authorities for these statements. Again, Evangelista says, page 180, "Why do you make a question, where there is none to be made? *Go*, saith Christ, *and preach the gospel to every creature under Heaven;* that is, go tell every man without exception, whatsoever his sins be, whatsoever his rebellions be, go and tell him these glad tidings, that, *if he will come in, I will accept of him, his sins shall be forgiven him, and he shall be saved; if he will come in, and take me, and receive me, I will be his loving husband, and he shall be mine own dear spouse.*" The reader will observe by the last words of the quotation, which I have put in italics, how thoroughly *conditional* is the language of the author. And that Mr. Fisher, had not mistaken the views of Culverwell and his associates, will be obvious on a perusal of Mr. Boston's long note at page 168, a small part of

which I subjoin. "Mr. Culverwell's words, here cited, stand thus at large. '*The matter to be believed unto salvation, is this: that God the Father, moved by nothing, but his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant of his Son Jesus Christ unto mankind, that whosoever of all mankind shall receive this gift, by a true and lively faith, he shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*' "*

Can any man, of reflecting mind, peruse such quotations as these without perceiving, that, according to the author of "the marrow," and the class of divines by whom his sentiments have been espoused, *the appropriating act of faith*, or *the accepting and applying to ourselves personally, Christ and his benefits, is the one thing needful?* There is, according to them, a vague, general, and indiscriminate grant of Christ, and of life everlasting through him, made to all mankind; but *it depends on my personally accepting this grant or offer, whether he and his benefits shall in reality belong to me!* But if this statement be correct, does it not necessarily follow, that it is not from the love of God manifested in the person and work of Christ, but from

* Hervey's sixteenth dialogue may be recommended to the perusal of my readers, as containing a somewhat more pleasing and elegant representation of *the appropriating scheme*, than is to be found on the pages of "the marrow." Speaking in the person of Aspasio, he says, "I would only maintain, that an *appropriation of Christ* is essential to faith:" and the exertions which, throughout the dialogue, he urges and encourages his friend Theron to make, in order to lay hold on Christ and his benefits, both constitute the best comment upon the expression quoted, as well as pronounce the most severe condemnation of his system.

an act or work of my own, that life everlasting falls to be derived by me? It is the leading principle of the system in question, that the work of Christ *is nothing, unless applied and appropriated by the individual to himself.* What is this, however, if words are to have any meaning assigned to them, but to make the work of *the creature* of more importance than that of *the Creator?* If, notwithstanding *all that the Messiah has done for me,* I must go to Hell *unless I do something for myself,* then, as what I do for myself is, upon this system, attended with results so much more important and advantageous to me, than those which spring from what Christ hath done in my behalf, the act of appropriation, *which is my own work,* will be, because it ought to be, *preferred by me to the work of Christ.* Nay, *if the work of Christ* be of no avail whatever, apart from *my appropriating act of faith,* is not *the work of Christ,* as to all saving efficacy, completely set aside—is it not reduced to a mere nonentity—and is not *the appropriating act,* instead of *the Lord Jesus,* represented to be *my Saviour?*

But the absurdities of the appropriating scheme do not rest here. According to it, Christ and life everlasting through him, do not belong to the individual, until the appropriating act of faith has been duly performed by him. If so, however, does it not follow, that instead of the divine testimony concerning the completeness of Christ's work, as the source of life everlasting, *being true in itself,* it can only *become true* in consequence of the individual *appropriating it to*

himself. At the very moment previous to his appropriating, *it was not true* that Christ and his benefits belonged to him; and yet, from the very moment that he can be prevailed on to perform this most extraordinary piece of *hocus pocus, it becomes true* that they belong to him. If so, what can be more manifest, than that *it depends on an act of the creature,* whether the divine testimony *shall be true or not?* If *I do not appropriate,* notwithstanding all that the inspired writers have declared, *it is false* that *Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin,* 1 John i. 7; and *it is false* that *he hath taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself,* Hebrews ix. 26; for, in that case, according to the scheme which we are now considering, *my sins remain uncleansed and unremoved.* On the contrary, if *I do appropriate,* then *I render it true* that *Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin,* and that *he hath taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself,* in so far as I myself am concerned. But surely, were the idea formally presented to the mind, the circumstance of *a divine testimony* depending for its truth upon *a contingent human act,* would appear to be something by far too absurd for infantine credulity itself to swallow. It must be, that the terms in which it has commonly been wrapped up, have procured for it countenance and support. Let us strip it, however, of this covering, and, after reducing it to a plain proposition, see how it looks. "So far from what God has said being true in itself, *it can only become true by an act of man.*" How does this language sound? and what person is there, who, when the idea is presented

to him in this naked and undisguised shape, will venture to cherish it? This, nevertheless, is the leading proposition of those who advocate the appropriating scheme. When my inheritance of eternal life, which God promises to bestow *unconditionally*, is made to depend on *the condition of my appropriating that blessing to myself*, two consequences obviously follow; first, *the lie direct is given to God*, and, secondly, *the truth of God is made to depend on an act of man, viz., the lie thus given by man to God!* See Rom. iii. 7, 8.

After these remarks on the nature of *the appropriating scheme*, it appears to me something like a work of supererogation to shew, at greater length, that this scheme absolutely constrains those who embrace it, to adopt *conditional* views of the manner of enjoying eternal life. If I regard my personal interest in Christ as depending either on my having already *performed*, or, on my intention at some future period *to perform an act of mind*, by which I render Christ himself and his benefits my own, what can be plainer or more palpable, than that I regard my interest in him and his benefits *as conditional?* Even granting that *the appropriating act* does require to be performed, it is obvious, that my peace of mind and hopes for eternity, must be in proportion to the confidence which I possess, that I have performed, or that I am able to perform it; and if there are certain marks and evidences of its having been duly performed, then my peace and hope must be in proportion to my ability to discover in myself the existence of these marks and evidences. That is, taking the

most favourable view of matters, by supposing the notions of the appropriating divines to be true, it is impossible to deny, that the man who considers his own interest in Christ to depend on his appropriation of him and his benefits, is taking a *conditional* view of that interest; and that he must continue to take a *conditional* view of it, while he retains the conviction of such an appropriation on his part being necessary. But the appropriating scheme thus necessarily *conditionalizing* men's views respecting eternal life, are the supporters and abettors of that scheme to be credited, when they profess to regard eternal life as a blessing which is *unconditionally bestowed?* Alas! so far is it from being true, that men are able to hold the doctrine of appropriation, along with correct and scriptural views of the manner in which eternal life is enjoyed, that, on the contrary, the necessity of performing the appropriating act, as the condition of everlasting life to ourselves personally, being once admitted, the glory of the cross of Christ and of spiritual blessings as flowing to us freely through it, immediately ceases to attract attention, and interest the mind. The whole bent of the efforts of preachers and writers on the subject, is thenceforward directed, to urge and exhort those over whom they have influence, to perform this all-important act, and to shew them the manner in which it is to be performed. And is it not matter of fact, that in a system thus thoroughly, glaringly, and even nauseatingly *conditional*, the sentiments of the appropriating divines have terminated?

Well might Mr. Barclay represent "the APPROPRIATING ACT of faith," as resting upon "the sandy foundation, which is called 'God's UNIVERSAL GRANT of a Redeemer to the world, or DEED OF GIFT, whereby Jesus Christ is supposed to have been eternally designed and appointed of the Father, for a Saviour by *office*, to all mankind sinners indefinitely—*a gift*,' say they, 'equally and originally belonging to the man now in torments, and to him in Abraham's bosom.'" And well might he add, with the most bitter and pointed sarcasm, "Could the former, unhappy man! but have appropriated as *stoutly* as the latter,—by exerting a certain act of his mind, whereby if he had believed that he was to be saved,—*saved infallibly* by that very *act*,—he would have been.—So all the sons of the *appropriation* bear witness.—What a pity, then, he did not *exert that act!*"* Barclay, *on the assurance of faith*, p. 12.

§ 2. The Sandemanian scheme.

This very extraordinary system deserves particular notice, not so much on account of the numbers of those who *directly* profess it,—for as a sect the Sandemanians are fast dwindling away, and in the course of a very few years probably will be extinct,—as of the ingenuity with which it has been concocted and supported, and the influence which *indirectly* it has exercised, and still

* Those who have any wish to see the errors of the appropriating scheme more fully exposed, should consult Sandeman's 2d and 3d *Letters* on Hervey's *Dialogues*; and a small treatise by the late Mr. John Nicol, of Abbotshall, near Kirkaldy, entitled *the one faith of the gospel, distinguished from the pretended act of appropriation.*

continues to exercise, over the minds of a large proportion of modern Calvinistic professors.

The errors of the appropriating scheme were too glaringly manifest, for it ever to become a lasting favourite with the religious public. Proposing as the subject matter to be believed, a testimony which can only become true by the pains taken to believe it, how could it, by any possibility, satisfy the minds of the acute and discerning? A system somewhat more consistent with the scriptures and with itself was loudly demanded; and this, the series of doctrines maintained by Mr. Robert Sandeman, in his celebrated *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, first published in 1758, was deemed, at first, by many religious characters to supply.

The views of Mr. Sandeman had been brought under public notice by Mr. John Glas, some time minister of Tealing near Dundee, about thirty years before. In consequence, however, of the very superior talents exhibited by Mr. Sandeman in its support, the system has since, both in England and America, generally borne his name; while the writings of his venerable friend and relative Mr. Glas, with the exception, perhaps, of his *King of Martyrs*, have been thrown into the shade, and almost entirely forgotten.

It is the leading feature of the Sandemanian system, that our own personal interest in Jesus Christ and everlasting life, constitutes *no part whatever of the testimony which the scriptures call upon us to believe.* Indeed so far from any conviction of a personal interest in spiritual and eternal blessings, entering into the belief

of the truth, the slightest idea of the kind mixing itself up with the credit which a man professes to attach to the divine testimony, is, by Sandemanians, denounced as vitiating his belief and savouring of the rankest Pharisaism. According to this very singular scheme, the man who believes the truth, is convinced that the work of Christ is finished,—that God the Father is well pleased with it,—and that it is the divine intention *through it* to confer everlasting life upon a certain definite number of the human race: *but that he himself has any personal interest in the truths which he believes, is to him, at the moment of his believing, a matter of perfect uncertainty!* In believing the gospel, according to Glas, Sandeman, and their followers, a man's own interest in its blessings, neither amounts, nor can amount, in his own estimation, to more than A BARE POSSIBILITY! He conceives that he may or may not be a child of God; and if any professor of Christianity will not be contented with this state of uncertainty, his faith is stigmatised by them as false and spurious! Should a Sandemanian wish to ascertain the fact of his being a believer, and thereby to acquire the knowledge of his own personal interest in evangelical blessings, he has no other way of accomplishing his object, than by a painful and persevering continuance in *the work of faith*, and *labour of love*, and *patience of hope*. It is only in proportion as he finds himself to abound in faith, and love, and self-denied obedience, that *he is entitled to draw a favourable conclusion as to the safety of his state*. The distinction between the provinces of

faith and *hope* consists, in the opinion of Messrs. Glas and Sandeman, in this, that the former respects the perfection of Christ's work without any personal reference whatever, and rests upon the divine testimony as its basis; whereas the latter respects our own personal interest in the blessings concerning which the scriptures testify, and rests upon the observed fruits and effects of faith as its basis.

The following characteristic paragraphs extracted from Mr. Sandeman's leading work, his *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, will satisfy the attentive reader that I have not given a false or distorted view of the system.

"That Christ died, that he gave his life a ransom for many, is indeed a truth fully ascertained in the scriptures, and established there, firm as a rock, for the relief of the shipwrecked and the desperate; yea, many finding rest here, have been determined to follow Christ, at all hazards, having no other reason to give for their attachment, but, *Thou hast the words of eternal life.*"

"That Christ died *for me*, is a point not so easily settled: and therefore I am not surprised to find Aspasio labouring hard, with much eloquence and skill, to establish it by a variety of props; and after all very ready, not only to pardon, but also to sympathize with his friend upon his remissness and inactivity to come up to it. This is a point which the scripture no where ascertains; so far from it," &c.

"The gospel proposes nothing to be believed by us, but what is infallibly true, whether we believe it or not.

For shall our own unbelief make the faith or veracity of God of none effect? Far be it! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one of his words shall fall to the ground. The gospel, which fortells the final perdition of so many of its hearers, so many seriously and zealously exercised about it, can never warrant us to persuade every one who hears it, to believe that Christ died for him; unless we shall say that Christ died for every individual of mankind, *and consequently that none of mankind owe their salvation wholly to his death.*"*

"I would willingly know by what authority Aspasio calls every one to believe that Christ died for him? The scripture no where says, that Christ died for such a one who now for the first time hears the gospel; what then shall persuade him that it is true?"†

"The doubtsome faith he" (Mr. Ebenezer Erskine) "complains of, is that which admits of a doubt concerning one's own state. Now, a man may have some doubts about this, *who is very firmly persuaded of the truth of the gospel:* yea, Paul calls upon some whom he himself looked upon as believers, to examine themselves, whether they were in the faith; and he exhorts others, about whom he observed the surest tokens of their being true Christians, to give all diligence to remove every doubt concerning their state; plainly intimating, that

* Letter 1st, page 13, 14. Edin. 1803. I cannot well see by what process of reasoning Mr. Sandeman brings out the conclusion with which this extract finishes. But it is of Arminianism, perhaps, he is speaking, and if so, the inference is right enough.

† Letter 2d, page 20.

they could not warrantably be assured of their happy state by any exercises of mind, without the fruits of faith, or the self-denied works of obedience."*

"And it may he added here, that no man can be assured that his sins are forgiven him, but in as far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness."†

"He who, perceiving the divine love to sinners of all sorts without distinction, manifested in the atonement, and the divine character appearing there, and so to enjoy the promised comfort resulting thence *to the obedient*, comes at the same time to know his particular interest in the atonement."‡

Not to burden the reader with too many quotations, the postscript to letter 5th is intended to shew, that *faith* or *the assurance of faith*, has respect merely to the proposition that Jesus is the Christ; all the conviction which any believer can have of his personal interest in Christ, coming under the head of *hope*, or *the assurance of hope*, and being the result of *the effects of faith observed in himself.*

Respecting *the tendency* of the system which is brought out in the foregoing extracts, it is impossible for those who are acquainted with the truth to come to any but one conclusion. It must from its very nature *conditionalize* the hopes of eternal life cherished by those who hold it. Indeed, this tendency so far from being

* Letter 5th, page 334.
† Letter 6th, page 409.
‡ Ditto, page 428.

denied, is avowed and gloried in by the adherents and abettors of Sandemanianism. The circumstance of eternal life being regarded by *a believer of the truth* (!), as a blessing of which he shall be put in possession *conditionally* and *contingently*, in their opinion, both stamps his faith as genuine, and constitutes his grand motive to obedience. "When he sets out in his Christian career, he is convinced that the testimony contained in the scriptures respecting Jesus of Nazareth is true; but the extent of the hopes cherished by him as to his own personal interest *in the great salvation*, amounts at first to no more than *a bare possibility*: and never at any future period during his lifetime, will he or can he, upon scriptural principles, rise to and acquire *a degree of confidence* relative to his own enjoyment of life everlasting, exceeding *the degree* in which he is able to discover in himself *the fruits and effects of faith*. Nay, if any professing Christian shall venture to entertain the slightest hope of the enjoyment of eternal life *by himself personally*, beyond what is founded on and warranted by *his perseverance in the painful and laborious work of self-denied obedience*, he contradicts the scriptures, incurs the charge of Pharisaism, and grossly deceives himself." Such is a fair abstract of the Sandemanian theory, in so far as respects the believer's hope of life everlasting. But although its bitterest enemies had purposely set themselves, to represent this theory as necessarily inspiring its votaries with *conditional* views of the subject, could they have contrived a more striking, decided, and efficacious

method of accomplishing their object, than that which its supporters have had recourse to? The founders of the system, we have just seen, maintain positively that they themselves, in common with *all other believers of the gospel* (!), regard their own personal enjoyment of eternal life *as depending on their actions*, which they attempt to disguise under the imposing scriptural appellations of *the work of faith* and *labour of love;* and can they, after thus expressing themselves, expect to obtain credit with any man capable of putting two ideas together, when, with the same breath, they profess to regard *eternal life* as *the gift of God?* Certainly not. It is, on their own shewing, a *conditional* view of the subject which they take. And representing themselves as expecting to enjoy eternal life *conditionally*, or, in other words, allowing themselves flatly to contradict the inspired record which declares the blessing to be bestowed *unconditionally*,—what, under such circumstances, remains for us who believe the truth, but, by regarding Sandemanians as *unbelievers*, to acquiesce in the correctness of the representations *which they themselves have chosen to give of their own characters*.

Strange that a system, which, of all those that have taken the Calvinistic theory for their basis, least deserves the character of *gospel*, should ever by any one have been supposed to be so. The word *gospel*, as every one knows, signifies *glad tidings;*—but is there any thing joyful in the intelligence, *that there are a million chances to one that I shall be damned?* Incredulous as some of my readers may be, this is actually, without the

slightest attempt at exaggeration or caricature, the legitimate import of the Sandemanian creed. Previous to Sandeman's time, Calvinistic writers and divines had agreed in maintaining, that it was of the very nature of the gospel, to impart *a certain degree* of confidence concerning his personal interest in its blessings, to the man by whom it was believed in.* They blundered egregiously, it is true, about *the degree of* confidence which the belief of the gospel inspired, and about *the manner* in which that confidence was to be attained to; but that *some*, nay, that in many cases *a very high degree* of personal confidence was connected with it, none of them seem once to have questioned. It was reserved for Messrs. Glas and Sandeman to try to effect a complete separation between, what they are pleased to call, *the belief of the truth*, and *the conviction of personal interest*

* I would not be doing justice to my readers were I to omit mentioning, that previous to Mr. Sandeman's time, a class of Calvinistic divines had sprung up, chiefly in what are now the United States of America, by whom a sentiment bearing a very strong resemblance to his leading one had been adopted. According to them, the love of the believer to God, if genuine, must be love to Him on account of *what He is in Himself*, and not on account of *what He is to us*, any admixture of the latter quality vitiating our love, by imparting to it a selfish taint. So far had some of them proceeded as to assert, that Christian love, if genuine, must be of such a nature as to constrain us to love God, even although we should be consigned by him to the flames of Hell! Need I spend time in exposing the monstrousness of such an idea? The scriptures in general, and the first epistle of John in particular, have already refuted and condemned it. It is true that I love God for *what He is in Himself*, it being impossible that a character which is not seen by me to deserve my love can command it: but it is also true that I see, and can only see *what God is in Himself*, in the light and through the medium of *the love which He has borne towards me*. 1 John iv. 8, 9, 10, &c. The measure of my knowledge of *what God is in Himself*, and of *what He is to me*, is always and necessarily one and the same.

in the truth believed! It was reserved for them to reduce the belief of the gospel to *a mere metaphysical abstraction!* Previous to their time, Calvinistic divines had contented themselves with suggesting, that the belief of the gospel does not *necessarily* imply an assurance on the part of the believer of his being personally interested in it:—but it was reserved for them to advance a step further, and to deny, that it was possible for a believer of the gospel at first to have *any knowledge* of a personal interest in its blessings; and to stigmatize every pretension to such a knowledge being involved in one's own belief as arrant presumption! Nay, according to Sandemanians, so far from its being desirable that believers should be convinced of *God's love to them in particular*, the more suspicious they are, lest after all they have professed and practised, they may turn out to be *children of the Devil* and *heirs of damnation*, so much the better for them! It must be conceded to Sandemanianism that there is nothing ambiguous in its statements. The only thing to be wondered at is, that such a system should ever have been mistaken for gospel!

To stop here might lay me open to the suspicion, of being actuated by undue prejudices against Mr. Sandeman and his system. With a view to obviate such an impression, let me observe, that essentially opposed in its leading principles as Sandemanianism is to the simplicity of the gospel, it is very far from deserving unmingled censure. To its author we are indebted for having aimed the first blow at the false

and delusive notions concerning the nature of faith, which, before his time, universally predominated; and for having detected and exposed the artifices of the popular preachers, in insisting on the necessity of certain works being performed by their hearers as preparations for believing. Faith, he clearly shewed, so far from being in any respect an act of the creature, is a passive persuasion of the truth of the testimony of the Creator, produced in the mind by the power and evidence of the testimony itself; and the idea of performing works acceptable in the sight of God previous to believing, he exposed as one of the results of the pride and ignorance of the human heart, presuming on its ability to make the first advances towards God, and substituting works of its own in place of the finished work of Christ. In a word, although the system of which I am now speaking is defective *as a whole*, no person who wants to have a clear and comprehensive view of the artifices by which, in matters of religion, man contrives to dupe and hoodwink his fellow man,—and of the methods by which the truth as it is in Jesus, may, under the pretence of supporting it, be frittered away and destroyed, —will grudge to devote a few hours to the perusal of the pages of Sandeman.*

* It cannot be denied that Sandeman's castigations of the popular clergy are most awful—that he lashes them not with whips but with scorpions—and that he even appears to have had it for one of his objects to goad them on to madness. And yet, bitter and sarcastic as his language concerning them is, will any man, acquainted with the class of characters with whom he had to deal, venture to say, that his strictures on the mode in which they were accustomed to address their auditories are unfounded or undeserved? Nay, is it not to the stinging severity

§ 3. The modified Sandemanian scheme.

Mr. Sandeman's system was too extravagant,—too unnatural,—to meet with general reception *as a whole.* But at the same time it was too remarkable, and was supported with too much ability, to permit it to be overlooked. The letters on Theron and Aspasio, as might have been expected, soon attracted the attention of all classes of religionists. The popular clergy, in particular, read them, felt the keenness of their sarcasm, *and gnawed their tongues for pain.* At first some attempts were made to defend the appropriating scheme by Mr. Cudworth and others; but the ill success which attended the efforts of these gentlemen, and the ineffable contempt with which Mr. Sandeman treated them, in the appendices to the second and third editions of his work, satisfied the clergy, that unless some more efficacious mode of turning aside the edge of his satire could be devised, their influence over the minds of men was gone for ever. But how to set about the matter they knew not; and it was not until their hopes from more than one quarter had been balked and frustrated, that they were at last obliged to be indebted to an individual who did not belong to their body, for extricating them from their dilemma.

A printer in Edinburgh, named M'Lean, was the person destined to become the champion of the clerical

of his criticisms, that much of the good which he has done by his writings falls to be traced? For my own part, I am free to confess, that to Sandeman's works, especially to his *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* and his *correspondence with Pike,* I lie under great obligations.

tribe in this emergency; and to suggest to them a method of prolonging their dominion over the consciences of men. Trained from his earliest years in the belief of *the appropriating scheme*, and afterwards enrolled for a while among the followers of Messrs. Glas and Sandeman, Mr. M'Lean appeared in due time as the originator and head of a new sect. He had abandoned the doctrine of appropriation when he joined the ranks of Sandeman; and he was possessed of an understanding by far too acute and discriminating to permit him ever to revert to it; but his early religious education, however defective in other respects, enabled him to perceive, that many parts of the Sandemanian scheme had not a much better foundation than *the appropriating act of faith* itself. A system which pretended to set forth the finished work of Christ as *glad tidings* to the mind,—and which yet, by denying *that the truth believed is seen to have any personal reference*, took away from it *all that could constitute it glad tidings*,—was rather too much to be stomached by a man of very ordinary capacity, much less by one of the talents and intelligence of Archibald M'Lean. He seems to have formed the idea, that by uniting certain parts of *the appropriating scheme* with *that of Sandeman*, a system more perfect and scriptural than either might be concocted. While, therefore, he continued to hold with Sandeman that there are no spiritual operations previous to believing, and that in believing the mind is perfectly passive; he maintained, in opposition to his quondam friend and associate, that the gospel when believed has so decidedly

a personal reference, as *to speak peace to the conscience and to inspire with the hope of life everlasting.* Unable, however, after all, to rise above mere *carnal* views of the subject, and desirous consequently to make some *natural* provision for the interests of holiness, he held, that our conviction of possessing a personal interest in Christ, *although originally derived from the truth believed, is nevertheless capable of being strengthened and confirmed, by the discovery in ourselves of the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.* The professing Christian, in proportion as he perceives himself to abound in these, acquires *additional evidences,* that is, *evidences additional to those which the divine testimony itself affords,* of his having a personal interest in the blessings of salvation. M'Lean, besides, adopted Sandeman's distinction between the respective provinces of faith and hope; conceiving the former to have a reference to *the divine testimony,*—the latter to *the conviction possessed by believers, that they themselves have an interest in that testimony.*

Mr. M'Lean's theory, which, *on natural principles,* reflects amazing credit on his shrewdness and discernment, is brought out at great length in his works, an octavo edition of which, in six volumes, was published by Mr. William Jones of London, in 1823. Those who have not time to consult the whole, will find a capital abstract of his sentiments, in his "Christ's Commission to his Apostles," by far the most valuable of his writings. How many a man who knows and loves the truth, in perusing this last-mentioned treatise, would almost take

Mr. M'Lean to have been a believer of the apostolic Gospel, until coming forward to the sections headed, "All who believe are immediately *conscious of it*, and *so* have evidence of their own particular salvation," page 93,—"The fruits of faith *an additional evidence of this to a man's own conscience*," p. 102,—and, how a man attains to *the full assurance of hope*," p. 106,—he finds out his mistake. Then, indeed, is the follower of the Lamb, who is capable of detecting religious sophistry under whatever disguise attempts may be made to conceal it, constrained to perceive in this gentleman's writings one *additional* evidence of the fact, that *strong natural judgment*, and *a mind enlightened from above through the medium of the scriptures*, are two very different things.

A system like that of M'Lean was admirably adapted for the purposes of the Calvinistic clergy. By embracing it, they could abandon *the approriating act*, without being obliged to submit to the humiliation of adopting, *as a whole*, the sentiments of their redoubtable and sarcastic antagonist. Modified Sandemanianism enabled them to appear extremely zealous for the purity of divine truth, in the eyes of the simple and the unreflecting;—while it enabled them, at the same time, to keep on good terms with all those, who were solicitous *upon natural principles* for the interests of holiness. When brought into contact with the former, they could declaim in the most decided manner on the blood of Christ, as *the sole foundation of hope towards God*;—when desirous to propitiate the latter, they could insist on the necessity of our discovering in ourselves the fruits and

effects of faith, *as the only satisfactory means of knowing that we are resting on the true foundation.** The system in question, too, could be made to amalgamate tolerably well with the ordinary Calvinistic one; requiring only the sacrifice of spiritual operations *previous to believing;* and in return for this, leaving in full force the necessity of discovering in ourselves such operations *subsequent to believing, as the grand means of ascertaining ourselves to be objects of the divine favour.* Thus, then, in addition to its sparing the feelings of those who had been so dreadfully lashed by Sandeman, M'Lean's theory possessed the grand recommendation of leaving the power of the clergy over their hearers *perfectly untouched.* It admitted, that in believing *there is peace spoken to the conscience;* but luckily for our spiritual guides *it is not perfect peace,* which would have emancipated us from their thraldom at once and completely; but only *a certain measure or degree of peace,* which is susceptible, consequently, of increase or diminution. Of this *degree of peace* the clergy are still the dispensers; and, in the management of it, they have still full scope left to them for the indulgence of their juggling practices with the conscience. They can give out to their gaping dupes, at one time, just as much of it as is requisite to keep them from absolute despair;—and, at another, can withhold it from them altogether, when

* Interpreted this means, to the mind itself they are *the only foundation of the foundation!* Laying all ambiguity aside, do not the fruits and effects of faith become, upon such principles, in proportion as they are supposed to be discovered, *the real foundation of hope towards God?*

there appears to be any risk of their bursting their fetters and escaping.* How invaluable a system like this, for a body of men, who had been so hard pressed by Sandeman, as to have been on the point of surrendering at discretion.

We are not to suppose, however, that urgent as were the claims which modified Sandemanianism had on the attention of the clergy, its usefulness all at once came to be perceived and appreciated by them. No, so far from this, many years elapsed before it even attracted their notice. Proceeding as it did from a person, who, in addition to his being destitute of any pretensions to the clerical character, was opposed to infant baptism and the notions concerning church membership which are almost universally prevalent, its author and itself were destined for a while to languish in obscurity. The first edition of "Christ's Commission to his Apostles," was published in 1786; and it was not until between ten and twenty years afterwards, that the prejudices of the religious world and their spiritual guides, could be so far softened down, as to procure for its statements a fair hearing. Indeed, the prevalence of modified Sandemanianism at the present day, in the northern part of the island, falls to be traced to something like a lucky accident. The Messrs. Haldane having about thirty or forty years since (1797)

* The relative situation of the clergy and their dupes, often reminds me of the introduction to Swift's *Tale of a Tub.* The one with open mouths gaping to receive, what the other in their goodness, and from the height which they occupy, think fit to allow to descend into them.

embraced it, and having taught it to the young men whom they sent forth from their academy to evangelize dark and benighted Scotland, it was thereby brought under the notice of the religious public in that country. Need I mention that the persons thus trained and sent forth, laid the foundation of that exceedingly respectable body of professors, the modern Scotch Independents;* that is, of the churches composing, what is now denominated, "The Scottish Congregational Union?" As might have been anticipated, the progress of Mr. M'Lean's sentiments with respect to *faith* and *the evidences of a personal interest in Christ,* when once fairly made known, was rapid and triumphant. Addressing themselves, as they do, to that *fleshly wisdom,* of a large portion of which their author was possessed, and which he knew well how to manage in others, they have met with an eager reception from *the professors of a spurious Christianity.* With a very slight alteration, I am perfectly ready to subscribe to the language of Mr. Jones, the biographer of Mr. M'Lean and the editor of his works, when, speaking of "Christ's Commission to his Apostles," he says, "that it carries an irresistible conviction to *the*" *natural* "*mind,* and that it would be difficult to name a book which has obtained more unqualified commendation." The view of Mr. M'Lean that, "in believing the gospel, *peace is spoken to the conscience and a good hope through grace inspired,* and yet *that the peace and hope com-*

* I say, "modern Scotch independents," to distinguish them from those bodies which hold the sentiments of Messrs. Glas and Sandeman.

municated are capable of being increased or diminished, in proportion as we are, or are not able, to discover in ourselves the evidences of genuine Christianity," having been thus propagated, and having thus obtained a footing, it will not surprise the reader to be informed, that it is now the acknowledged and standard doctrine of the modern Scottish independent or congregational churches. It runs through, and is the key to the understanding of, the writings of the Messrs. Haldane; of *the Letters Practical and Consolatory,* and other works, by Mr. Russell of Dundee; and of Mr. Erskine of Linlethan's two essays on "the internal evidences" and "faith." It has also obtained the advocacy of Dr. Wardlaw of Glasgow. The last-named gentleman has recently published a pleasing, plausible, and rather elegantly written treatise, consisting of two parts, in one of which, entitled *an essay on the Assurance of Faith,* the modified Sandemanian views relative to the subject are stoutly contended for. On account of the intrinsic merit of the work, I will not be surprised to learn, that it has become a favourite with the religious public; and that it has been pretty generally received as a sort of manual or text-book of the doctrine in question. The author, it is true, has contrived throughout the treatise, and especially in the third and fourth sections of proposition fifth, grossly to contradict the scriptures;—*peace of conscience, and knowledge of our own personal interest in life everlasting,* according to them, *flowing to us solely through faith in the blood of Jesus;* whereas *the consciousness of*

spiritual character, or of bringing forth the fruits and effects of faith, according to Dr. Wardlaw, *co-operating with the blood of Jesus in assuring believers of the safety of their state:*—but contradiction of the word of God is, in the estimation of the religious, of little consequence; Dr. Wardlaw's oft-repeated denial of his having had any intention, by his statements, *to supersede the all-sufficiency and alone-sufficiency of the work of Christ,* being of course received, by such persons, as proof positive that he has not done so. Modified Sandemanianism, now, is not confined to the members of the Congregational Union. Through their instrumentality, public attention having been directed towards what otherwise might have remained the Shibboleth of a few obscure sectarians, this system is now very far from being disliked in the Secession Church; and may even number among its supporters, individuals belonging to the Scottish establishment itself. The sermons and other compositions of popular clergymen connected with the last-named body, which are now heard from the pulpit, and have lately issued from the press, are strongly tinged with modified Sandemanian sentiments. Some of them, probably, would not like to acknowledge "Christ's commission to his apostles," as the source from which their views have been derived;—and others, like Dr. Barr, in attempting to reconcile *the standard doctrines of the kirk,* with *the modification of them now so prevalent,* go to work very awkwardly;—but, notwithstanding all this, the influence of M'Lean's writings is rapidly progressing; and I have little doubt

that, in a few years, the doctrines which he maintained, will constitute the regular and authorised method of throwing dust in the eyes of seriously-disposed persons. Several English dissenting ministers, from a conviction of its value, have already become converts to the modified Sandemanian theory, and are now actively engaged in propagating it. If the popular clergy of the church of England have not yet embraced it, the circumstance may be accounted for, partly on the ground of their ignorance of it, and partly on that of their having ado with a class of characters less reflecting than the Calvinistic Scotch: but the reason which, perhaps, more than any other, prevents them from adopting and proclaiming somewhat superior views is, they find the religious public so thoroughly drugged by the zealous and indefatigable followers of Wesley, that the chaff of semi-Arminianism is the only spiritual sustenance which they can prevail on it to swallow.*

* Let me not be understood as asserting, that none of the Church of England clergy have embraced Mr. M'Lean's sentiments. So far from this, several among them belonging to the Calvinistic school of divinity, have long been acquainted with that gentleman's theory, and have long since adopted it as part of their creed. Although the views broached by the late Mr. Scott, of Aston-Sandford, in his note on Heb. vi. 11, already quoted and commented on, proceed on principles maintained two centuries since by Bellarmin, I cannot help suspecting, from the manner in which he expresses himself, that these views were immediately suggested to him, by a perusal either of "Christ's commission," or of the postscript to Sandeman's fifth letter, or perhaps of both. By the by, for a specimen of the second-hand way in which writers on all subjects, especially on that of theology, are but too much accustomed to take up their sentiments, the intelligent reader may be referred to Dr. Barr's remarks on "the assurance of understanding," "the assurance of faith," and "the assurance of hope," which seem to be almost literally borrowed from Scott.

The modified Sandemanian scheme, like the other pretended improvements of Calvinism which we have been already considering, presents eternal life to the mind as a benefit which is to be *conditionally* enjoyed. It is true that nothing can exceed the earnestness with which, in so many words, its adherents insist on eternal life being *the gift of God;* and maintain, in opposition to Sandeman and his party, that a conviction of personal interest in the blessings of salvation *is necessarily connected with the belief of the gospel.* It is true that M'Lean and his followers disclaim, in language of the most marked abhorrence, the Sandemanian notion of *the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope,* constituting the *sole* evidences of our having an interest in the atonement.* But what, pray, is the nature or amount of that interest, which, according to the theory of M'Lean, Wardlaw, and others, a believer of the gospel conceives himself to have in spiritual and eternal blessings? for we must sift this matter to the bottom, and not allow ourselves to be put off with mere words. Is it a *conditional,* or is it an *unconditional* interest? If the answer shall be that it is *a conditional one,* then why pretend that a believer regards eternal life as *the gift of God,* or as *unconditionally bestowed?* But if, as is more likely, the out-and-out follower of M'Lean, when thus closely interrogated, shall be advised to reply, that peace is never spoken to the conscience, except by a view of God as bestowing eternal life *unconditionally;*—then how, I ask, can a person

* M'Lean's "Christ's Commission," *ut supra,* pages 93—102.

whose conscience has been thus pacified, either require or receive an increase and confirmation of his peace, from the discovery that certain *conditions* have been fulfilled in or by himself? If an *unconditional* view of the divine character be capable of speaking peace to the conscience at first, then what more or what besides is required to produce the same effect afterwards? If by a view of God as bestowing eternal life *unconditionally* the sense of guilt be removed, can the same effect flow from a view of God as bestowing that privilege *conditionally*? A hope of eternal life as *freely* and *unconditionally* bestowed, I can understand—a hope of that privilege as depending on the possession or performance of *conditions*, I can form some conception of likewise—but how a hope of it as depending on *the possession of certain qualifications*, should nevertheless be a hope of it as *unconditionally bestowed*, is what I confess surpasses my comprehension. When it is asserted by a follower of M'Lean, that the hope of eternal life, which, as originally entertained by the Christian, springs from a view of the privilege as *unconditionally bestowed*, is susceptible of being afterwards increased and corroborated by the fulfilment in himself of *certain conditions*, as, by so doing, he renders himself obnoxious to the charge of representing *the same effect* to result from *two opposite and self-contradictory causes*, does he not stand convicted of broaching an arrant absurdity? Nay, is he not chargeable with maintaining, that a hope originally produced by *the testimony of God*, or *by the highest of all authority and the strongest of all evidence*,

is capable of being subsequently confirmed *by evidence necessarily of an inferior kind?* But the fact is, let them do what they will to disguise it, that the view of the grounds on which God bestows eternal life, entertained by the supporters and abettors of modified Sandemanianism, is *a thoroughly conditional one.* The believer, according to them, sees that the sins of Christ's people are taken away by the blood of the atonement, and has *a somewhat stronger hope* of possessing a personal interest in that blood than Sandeman allowed; but still it is a hope of *a conditional kind*; for, *not merely its increase, but even its very existence, depends, in the believer's opinion, on his future and persevering obedience.* Hence it is, that no genuine disciple of the school of Archibald M'Lean is instructed or even permitted to declare, that *he is absolutely and infallibly certain of God having given to him eternal life.* He is expected to use the ordinary canting language of the sect,—which is that of religious professors in general,—and to say, that *he hopes God has given him an interest in his Son;* or that *he humbly trusts that he shall have eternal life;* or that *if he perseveres to the end, he has no doubt that he shall enjoy the privilege,* and so on. What, however, is all this, but proclaiming in terms the most distinct and explicit, that eternal life carries to his mind the aspect of a privilege which is to be *conditionally* enjoyed? He must discover in himself certain fruits and effects, before he can be entitled to speak with any degree of confidence in regard to his future state. These fruits and effects, of course, have *no existence at*

the time of his first believing—they are to his mind, then, of the nature of *unfulfilled conditions*—and if so, what other conclusion can we come to respecting a system, which instructs its votaries to postpone cherishing confidence of being personally interested in eternal life, until they shall have discovered in themselves these fruits and effects, than that it *necessarily constrains them to take a conditional view of the subject?*

Gratifying would it be, were the charge of *conditionalizing* the Gospel, bad as it is, the only one to which M'Lean and his partisans were obnoxious. A regard to truth, however, compels me to add, that their system is rootedly false and deceptive. It carries on the face of it the worst features of Sandemanianism, while it is entirely destitute of the openness and straight-forwardness of purpose, which is the grand recommendation, and the chief redeeming quality, of that ingenious and remarkable theory. When stripped of the verbiage and circumlocution which have been employed to disguise it, what is the system of M'Lean, but Sandemanianism after all? According to M'Lean,* Wardlaw,† and others, the divine testimony does not furnish any man, *directly*, with a warrant or authority to believe *that he himself personally has an interest in eternal life.* Why, so says Sandeman. According to the modifying gentlemen, there is *a consciousness of believing* connected with *belief itself*, from which one proof of our personal Christianity is derived. Sandeman does not

* M'Lean's "Christ's Commission."

† Wardlaw "on the assurance of faith."

avowedly separate *belief* from *the consciousness of believing*, only, like themselves, he suggests that *this consciousness may deceive us.* It is true that, according to them, *the fruits and effects of faith* are, *nominally*, of the nature of *additional evidences* to the believer of his faith being genuine; while, according to Sandeman, they are *the sole evidence* to him of the genuineness of this principle: but the difference is discovered to be merely verbal when we consider, that as, in the opinion of the former, the conclusion to which we may have originally come respecting our state *from the consciousness of belief*, falls subsequently to be modified *by the fruits and effects which the supposed principle is observed to bring forth*, these fruits and effects become necessarily and in reality to our minds, in spite of all that may be alleged to the contrary, *the sole because the ultimate arbiters of our fate.* Thus, again, we find M'Lean and his party, although by a somewhat roundabout process, coming back to and occupying the same ground which Sandeman himself does. Nor does it mend the matter to say, that Sandeman makes *hope* and *the assurance of hope* to rest on those fruits and effects as their basis; whereas according to modified Sandemanians,* *hope*, and *the assurance of hope*, rest upon the divine record no less decidedly than faith itself; for, by representing these fruits and effects as being to us the evidence of our faith and hope being genuine, the latter make their

* Only some of them, for there are others who express themselves, in relation to this point, exactly as Sandeman himself does.

fruits and effects the *ultimate*, and thereby the *real* and *only* foundation of our faith and hope, as decidedly as if they were to express themselves to this effect in so many words. Modified Sandemanianism, then, although it sets out by pretending to reject many of Mr. Sandeman's principal doctrines, terminates in leading us, by a somewhat circuitous route, back to them again. It pretends to shew us in *the declarations of the divine testimony themselves*, a perfect and all-sufficient foundation of hope; and when we are ready to think that we have obtained a firm footing, it all at once removes our fancied support, and attempts to put the change upon us, by presenting to us *self* as the only ground upon which, in reality, we can take our stand! Abominable trickery! Commend me, in preference to all such double-dealing and *deceitful workings*, to the plain, manly, straightforward system of Sandeman himself. If I do not like it, I know, at least, what I have ado with. If pure Sandemanianism be not *gospel*,—if it present to me nothing but *a conditional ground of hope*, —at all events its principles are so fairly and unequivocally stated, as to spare me the pain of being obliged to charge it with *dishonesty*.

I have thus, I presume, established, to the conviction of every unprejudiced and discerning individual, the position laid down by me,—that the view of everlasting life presented by the Calvinistic scheme itself, as well as by its numerous branches and modifications, is, notwithstanding all the attempts that may be made to gloss

over the fact, in reality *a conditional one.* And can we wonder after this at doubts and fears, in regard to their own personal attainment of the privilege, being found universally to prevail among the adherents of Calvin? Eternal life, instead of being proposed to them as *the gift of God,* that is, as a blessing the enjoyment of which does not depend *on any conditions to be possessed or performed by man,*—is always set before them as what cannot be attained to, *unless a certain change shall have been undergone and certain fruits shall have been brought forth by them,* that is, *as a privilege which can only be conditionally enjoyed.* The comfortable persuasion that as certainly as we inherit death through the first Adam, so certainly shall we inherit everlasting life through the second, which, according to the scriptures themselves, is derived by us *solely* and *exclusively* from the divine declaration that everlasting life is *unconditionally bestowed,* is, according to the Calvinistic scheme and its various modifications, derived by us, *in part at least, if not wholly,* from our discovering that *the work of the Spirit has been duly performed in us,*—or, *that the fruits of the Spirit are being brought forth by us,*—or *that some other condition of our attaining to it has been fulfilled in us or by us!* Now, is it to be wondered at, that persons trained in a school of divinity like this, should use the language, catch the spirit, and walk in the footsteps of their teachers—that they should be expecting to enjoy eternal life *conditionally* and *contingently,* and be filled with doubts and fears, and gloomy forebodings that, notwithstanding all

their efforts, they may come short of it—nay, would it not justly exceed surprise, if, taught continually to regard eternal life as a privilege of *conditional attainment*, they should be found taking a scriptural view of the subject? The fact must be apparent to every man, whose mind has been enlightened by the scriptures themselves, that the doubts and fears of the flock, are the legitimate offspring of *the conditional language* employed, and *the conditional views* presented to them, by their spiritual guides. And as every individual thus taught, conceives the enjoyment of eternal life by himself personally to depend on his possessing certain attributes and qualities, he must, as a matter of course, conceive the enjoyment of the privilege by others likewise to depend on the possession of similar attributes and qualities by them. But if such be, as it must be acknowledged they are, the views entertained by Calvinists of almost all grades and denominations, can there be imagined any thing more preposterous, than that of a set of men, who are thus, *by their own admitted principles*, convicted of regarding eternal life as *conditionally bestowed*, nevertheless pretending to regard it as *the gift of God*?

Unable, however, as my Calvinistic friends may be, to turn aside completely the edge of the weapon with which I assail them, it is probable that they will have recourse to some such means of defence as the following. "We cannot deny that, by our own admission, you seem to have obtained some advantage over us; but we do

not despair of being able to shew that this advantage is only apparent. In spite of the broad and unqualified charges which you have thought meet to bring against us, and which you have been endeavouring to substantiate, we believe as firmly as you can do, that *eternal life is the gift of God*, and that *it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy that God saves us.* At the same time, we must confess, that we hold his own future and personal enjoyment of everlasting life, to be to every believer, in some measure, *conditional and contingent;* nor do we conceive that we could do otherwise, without endangering the foundations of religion and morality. Were we to lend the weight of our authority to the idea, that it is the privilege of Christians in general *to be absolutely and infallibly certain of their possessing everlasting life,* what principle would remain of sufficient force to counteract in them their native tendencies to evil? The *conditionality* of eternal life to every believer personally, therefore, we hold to be exceedingly salutary; and we are satisfied, that although there may still appear to be a difference between *you* and *us*, nay, between *our statements* and *the language of scripture,* this difference, if thoroughly examined, will be found to be of little importance,—merely *verbal* at the utmost,—and capable of being explained without the slightest difficulty."

Now passing over, in the mean time, the cant about *the certainty of everlasting life to the individual himself* being inconsistent with morality, frowning upon the interests of holiness, and so on,—a subject which I

shall afterwards take up and consider,—I beg leave at once to inform the Calvinistic tribe, that the difference between *them* and *me*, so far from being merely *verbal*, is *essential*; and that, in their favourite sentiment, of *his own ultimate possession of everlasting life, being always to the believer himself, more or less contingent and conditional*, there are consequences involved, of the importance of which they do not seem to be aware. The difference between them and me trifling, think they? Nay, truly; and that it is not so, some of themselves even, unless I mistake much, will be obliged to see, and, if candid, will not hesitate to acknowledge; provided they can be induced to give the requisite attention to the following statements, which I have now to submit to their consideration.

1. If his own personal interest in everlasting life be always more or less *conditional* to him by whom the gospel is believed in, then is there nothing in the gospel which *the natural man* may not understand; that is, the gospel is represented to be a scheme of *mere naturalism*. It is laid down as an axiom by the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinth. ii. 14, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* But is there any thing foolish or revolting to such a character, in the idea of eternal life or any other spiritual privilege, being conferred on him *conditionally?* Certainly not. It was the original declaration to Adam, that he should forfeit his natural existence only in the event of his

eating the forbidden fruit; that is, his continuing to possess his natural life and the blessings connected with it, was represented to him, and was understood by him to be *conditional.* The first transgression had been committed, and man's pristine state of innocence and purity had been forfeited, before God proclaimed himself to be the Saviour; or, announced himself as a Being, by whom a state of existence and the enjoyment of blessings vastly superior to those which man had originally possessed, were to be bestowed on him *unconditionally.* The first promise was not, that the seed of the woman, *in the event of Adam's more correct and circumspect behaviour in future,* or, *in the event of his fulfilling conditions anew prescribed to him,* should bruise the head of the serpent; but, that the seed of the woman, *solely in virtue of the divine purpose,* and *independently of the performance of any conditions whatever by Adam and his natural posterity,* should succeed in doing so. *It,* said God, speaking of the woman's seed and addressing the serpent, SHALL BRUISE *thy head.* Gen. iii. 15. This new view of matters, then, stood distinguished from that which God had at first presented to Adam by the very obvious circumstance, that his continuing to possess *conditionally* the life which he originally had, was an idea *natural* to his mind,—whereas his becoming a partaker of eternal life *unconditionally,* was an idea imparted to him by *special and supernatural revelation.* Now, there is no respect in which Adam's posterity evince their connection with him, and their possession of the same nature which he

had, more remarkably, than in the readiness with which they apprehend the idea of *divine favours being conditionally enjoyed.* Ask a little child the reason why he expects to go to heaven after death, and the answer which, unless taught from the scriptures themselves, he returns to you, will amount to this; that *if he do good,* or, *if he please God,* or, *if he obey his commandments,* he shall go there; that is, he expects to go there *conditionally.* Put the same question to an adult, whether making a profession of religion or not, and unless the scriptures be understood by him, you may count upon receiving a similar answer. So thoroughly, indeed, does the *conditionality* of their notions relative to divine and heavenly blessings constitute a family feature of the whole human race *naturally,* that so far from its being necessary to repair for proofs of it, to the Indian Brahmin or the Popish anchorite, it will but too frequently be found to lurk under the fairest and the most scriptural profession. How often is it the fate of the Christian,—after listening to a pleasing declaration of hopes of life everlasting, derived from *the blood of Christ,* and *the grace of God,* and *the gift that is by grace,*—to have all his satisfaction dashed and spoiled by the discovery, that, notwithstanding the speciousness of the language employed, the hopes entertained are derived *from conditional views of the divine character after all.* The person, with whom you are conversing, may all the while be utterly unconscious of having said a single word by which his ignorance of real Christianity could be betrayed; and yet he has been shewing you,

in a way which leaves no possibility of mistake, that his confidence, such as it is, owes its origin, not to the naked unsupported declarations of the Supreme Being, but to the fancied discovery of something distinguishing in himself. He has been informing you, with the most perfect self-complacency, that *if* he persevere in his present sentiments,—or, *if* he continue standing in the faith,—or, *if* he possess or perform something else,—he trusts that he shall see God's face in glory. .. *If?* Why whence this *if-fing*,—this *conditionalizing* of eternal life,—on the part of the great majority of those who have paid any attention to the subject of religion? Is there any way of satisfactorily accounting for it but one, that to take a *conditional* view of the enjoyment of spiritual and heavenly blesssings is *natural* to the human mind;—and that to take a view of them as bestowed *unconditionally*, must be in every case, as it was in that of Adam himself, the result of *special and supernatural revelation.* If any Christian shall be desirous to verify for himself the correctness of these statements, let him propose to the first man or body of men, that he may chance to meet with, views of religion which, whatever phraseology he may choose to employ, leave the personal hope of the individual or individuals, whom he addresses, *conditional* and therefore *doubtful;* and if he can but procure a hearing, he will experience no difficulty in conveying his meaning to his auditor or auditors. On the contrary, let him propose eternal life as a blessing which God bestows *unconditionally*, or, without any reference whatever to

distinguishing qualities in the individuals upon whom he sees meet to bestow it, and he will soon discover that his statements are very far indeed from being received with the same ease and avidity. Nay, in spite of all the care and pains which he may take to explain himself, the chances are incalculably great against his even succeeding in giving, to those whom he addresses, an idea of the meaning of the language which he makes use of. The discrepancy between the results in the two cases being so great, how fair the conclusion, that when you present to men *conditional* means of divine and spiritual blessings, you address them in a way which is level to their *natural* apprehensions of things; and that, on the other hand, the idea of eternal life being *unconditionally* bestowed is not *natural* to the human mind. If you dispute this, assign to me a better reason, if you can, why views of eternal life as *conditionally* bestowed should, by the great majority of mankind, at once be assented to and acquiesced in; and why views of it as *unconditionally* bestowed, should without any hesitation be rejected by them as absurd and inadmissible? But it is more likely that my antagonist, instead of disputing the fact of mankind *naturally* adopting *conditional* views of the mode in which eternal life is to be enjoyed, will admit it; and will, from this very circumstance, boldly argue the absurdity of presenting to the mind an idea of the subject which is confessedly *unnatural*. "How much better," will he be apt to allege, "to accommodate ourselves to men's *natural* conceptions of things,—and to avoid urging upon them

what, by your own admission, transcends their *natural* apprehensions." All such reasoning as this, be it observed, proceeds upon the principle of conceding to me, the very thing which I adduce as a charge against *conditional* notions of eternal life, that *they do not rise above what is natural to the mind,*—that *they reduce the gospel to a mere scheme of naturalism.* Are my adversaries prepared to take up and defend this position, at the expense of overturning all that is *supernatural* in the divine testimony; and of contradicting the apostle, by maintaining, in opposition to him, that there is nothing in the religion of Christ which can appear to be *foolish* or *irrational to the natural mind?* If so, I have done. But if not, how can they pretend to assert the existence of any thing *supernatural* in the views presented to us by the gospel message, when, according to themselves, the hopes which the gospel inspires are merely of a *conditional,* that is, as I have already shewn, of a *natural* kind? O! how painful the fact, which a growing acquaintance with the religious world is continually obtruding upon our notice, that the great bulk of Calvinists,—notwithstanding the specious language which from time to time they employ respecting the gratuitousness of eternal life,—are, by *conditionalizing* their own hopes and those of others, proving themselves never to have been able to rise above mere *natural* views of the subject.

2. If his own personal interest in everlasting life must always, in the apprehension of the believer, be *more or less conditional,* and consequently can never

amount to *absolute and infallible certainty*, then does the religion of Jesus leave the man who believes it, in the same state of mind as if he were a sceptic or an infidel. If we wish to describe accurately a systematic or philosophic infidel, we must speak of him as one whose mind is in a state of *doubt* or *uncertainty*. Whenever such a person abandons the ground of *doubt*, and pretends to *certainty*, he quits his strong hold and involves himself immediately in self-contradiction. David Hume, the Prince of modern philosophic infidels, claimed no other and no higher character than that of *a sceptic* or *doubter*. Among the other topics, concerning which a candid and enlightened infidel will acknowledge himself to be in doubt, is, the situation which he is to occupy, and the circumstances in which he is to be placed, when his life here shall have come to a close. Were he to declare that he had attained to *certainty* in reference to this point either one way or another, he would, as a matter of course, forfeit his sceptical character. Let us now consider *the Christian*, as he is deliniated to us, not only by the Arminian or openly anti-Christian party, but likewise by the Calvinists or pretenders to a purer faith. Is he, according to them, *certain* as to what shall be his personal state and circumstances hereafter? If he were so, then unquestionably there would be presented to us a decided and characteristic difference between the state of *his mind*, and that of *the minds of the infidel tribe*. But, is this the case? Alas! no. The Christian regarding the final attainment of the heavenly glory by himself personally as *conditional*, of

course regards it likewise as *uncertain*, and consequently finds himself unable to say with perfect confidence that he shall be either happy or miserable hereafter! Such is the representation of Christianity given us even by the disciples of Calvin, and by the numerous sects who, with various modifications, have adopted his sentiments. The religion of Jesus is, according to them, unable to inspire a man with *absolute and infallible certainty* respecting his own future and final destiny! Can such persons be aware, that by representing the personal hope of the believer of the gospel as *conditional* and therefore *uncertain*, they represent him as sharing a sceptical frame of mind with the open and avowed infidel? Just let them conceive of one of *their Christians* brought into contact with a shrewd and talented follower of Carlile and Taylor, and being thus interrogated by him. "INFIDEL. So you think my situation a dangerous one, do you? CALVINIST. I certainly do so, and pray God to bring you out of it. INFIDEL. Well, I acknowledge, that I know nothing about what is to befal me hereafter. I may be happy,—I may be miserable,—I may be neither; futurity to me indeed is a matter of doubt and uncertainty. CALVINIST. I pity you from the bottom of my heart. INFIDEL. Your state of mind, no doubt, is a comfortable and an enviable one. You, no doubt, are triumphing in the prospect of the felicity which awaits you, when you leave this world. CALVINIST. Why, I hope I have *a good hope through grace*. I trust I shall be happy hereafter. INFIDEL. Surely my ears deceive me, or there is a

something in your language, which justifies me in suspecting, that you are not so very confident after all respecting your own future prospects. Do you mean to say that you are *absolutely certain* of being happy hereafter? or is it your intention to intimate that you have *some doubts* upon the subject? CALVINIST. Why, I think that I have a well grounded hope. I think that I have observed in myself the work of the Spirit. Only, one would not like to be presumptuous. It becomes a Christian to speak diffidently in regard to a point of so much importance as this. INFIDEL. Please to come to the point at once. Are you *certain* that you shall be happy hereafter? or are there *some doubts* in your mind respecting the matter? CALVINIST. Truly, I cannot say that I am *absolutely certain.* I am satisfied of this, that *if* I persevere I shall get to heaven. INFIDEL. Come, give me your hand, friend. Brother sceptic, I should rather say. Allow me to congratulate you on your truly philosophical confession. Why, henceforward, should you and I quarrel about our respective sentiments? From the admission which you have just made, as to the nature of your hopes of future happiness, it appears plainly, that the difference between us is exceedingly slender—that it is, in fact, merely verbal. For, while I, *without any religion at all,* confess that I am *uncertain about futurity,* it appears that *your religion* has left you *as uncertain about it* as I myself am. Surely, men who are thus both *confessedly sceptical* respecting a point of so much importance as their own future destiny, can have very little, in reality,

to object to in one another."* I should like to know, how a follower of Calvin, or Sandeman, or M'Lean, or Wardlaw, would extricate himself from the dilemma, in which he might thus with the utmost ease be placed? It would not answer his purpose to shew, that there were *degrees of uncertainty;* and that *the uncertainty of the infidel* respecting future happiness, was greater than *his own.* For, leaving the religion of Jesus still open to the charge of being *a religion of scepticism or uncertainty,*—and thereby admitting it to be *specifically the same with every other system which has ever laid claim to the name of religion,*—would not, even on his own shewing, the view which I have given of popular religion be completely substantiated? And, then, the main question recurs. If Christianity does not impart to those who embrace it *the certainty of future happiness,* wherein does it differ from, and why should it be preferred to, any other religion, which, like

* The extract from Lord Byron's life, with which I have prefaced this chapter, affords a clear proof of the ease with which the vigorous mind of that highly gifted but miserable man, saw through the leading absurdity of popular religion.—Heathens, although uncertain about futurity, were not *altogether destitute of a hope* that hereafter they might be happy. Christianity, as it had always been represented to poor Lord Byron, by holding out to its votaries a prospect that hereafter they might be happy, and yet leaving the matter *uncertain,* clearly identified itself to his mind *as to its most important feature* with Heathenism. Well might his Lordship, taking this view of the religion of Jesus, sneer at it and at the hopes of its professors. Blessed be God's name, we who understand what Christianity is, and believe it in reality, know, that instead of its leaving doubts in the mind with respect to futurity, it is the complete removal of all such doubts; and that instead of its facts being believed in independently of our seeing our own interest in them, it is only through the medium of our seeing our own interest in the facts which it proclaims, that these facts enter *as divine truths* into our minds.

t, holds out to the children of men *conditional and therefore uncertain prospects of everlasting felicity?**

3. In the third place, if we must admit that the personal interest of the Christian in everlasting life is to himself necessarily *more or less conditional*, then does the belief of the gospel on the part of men now, differ essentially from what it was on the part of the apostles and early Christians. Peter begins his second epistle, with these remarkable words. *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ,* TO THEM THAT HAVE OBTAINED LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH WITH US, *through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* From this language it is evident, that the letter is addressed to, and that the privileges enumerated in it are the property of, those only *whose faith is the same with that of the apostles.* A similar remark is applicable to the other epistles. If any man, therefore, possess not the apostolic faith, it is in vain for him, upon scriptural principles, to lay claim to the privileges which belong only to those who possess it. But what was the faith of the apostles? Let us listen to what Paul, Peter, and John, speaking by inspiration, have said in reference to this subject. Paul's confessions of faith are remarkably strong, as witness the following. I KNOW *whom I have believed, and* I AM PERSUADED, *that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him,*

* See this subject treated of at some length, and applied to the Roman Catholic Controversy, in a small pamphlet published in 1827, entitled, "a letter to the Rev. Richard T. P. Pope, adverting to some important mistakes committed by him in his recent controversy with the Rev. Thomas Maguire."

against that day. 2 Tim. i. 12. *Henceforth there is laid up* FOR ME *a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give* ME *at that day: and not* TO ME *only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* iv. 8. TO ME *to live is Christ, and to die is gain. I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and* TO BE WITH CHRIST, *which is far better, &c.* Philip. i. 21, 23. Nor has Peter any doubts concerning the relationship in which God stood to him, and he to God. *Blessed be the God and Father of* OUR *Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten* US *again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, &c.* 1 Peter i. 3, &c. *For* WE *have not followed cunningly devised fables, when* WE *made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty, &c.* 2 Peter i. 16. But John surpasses all the other apostles, in the positiveness of the declarations which he employs. WE ARE OF GOD; *he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us.* 1 John iv. 6. And that those whom the apostles addressed had the same faith with themselves, is apparent, not merely from the passage in 2d Peter already quoted, but from their continually including their fellow believers along with themselves by the use of the pronouns *we* and *us*, and from the language which they expressly address to them. The beginnings of almost all Paul's epistles might be referred to, in proof of my present position. Look, for instance, at the way in which that eminent man opens his epistle to Titus. *Paul a servant of God,*

and an apostle of Jesus Christ, ACCORDING TO THE FAITH OF GOD'S ELECT, AND THE ACKNOWLEDGING OF THE TRUTH WHICH IS AFTER GODLINESS. And what is it that distinguishes those who are possessed of these spiritual privileges? The next verse informs us that it is the *hope of eternal life, which, God that cannot lie, promised before the world began.* Titus i. 1, 2. *For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but* YE HAVE RECEIVED *the spirit of adoption, whereby* WE CRY, *Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with* OUR SPIRITS, *that* WE *are the children of God.* Rom. viii. 15, 16. Peter is equally explicit in ascribing to those whom he addressed the apostolic faith. *Forasmuch as* YE KNOW *that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot.* 1 Peter i. 18, 19. So likewise is John. *I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth; but* BECAUSE YE KNOW *it, and that no lie is of the truth.* 1 John ii. 21. *These things have I written unto* YOU THAT BELIEVE *on the name of the Son of God.* v. 13. From these passages,—and more if necessary might be adduced,—it is evident, both, that the apostles themselves were absolutely and infallibly certain of their own belief of the truth, and of their own future possession of the heavenly glory, and also, that they addressed men possessed of and actuated by similar principles. A fact thus so broadly and frequently stated in scripture, viz., *that the privileges of Christianity belong only to those who possess like precious faith*

with that of the apostles, could not be overlooked by the tribe of Calvinists. But what is the line of conduct which, by the observation of this fact, they have been led to pursue? Why, it was obvious, that if they insisted on the personal hope of themselves *as believers* being more or less *conditional* and *contingent,* they behoved either to admit that *their faith was essentially different from that of the apostles,* or, by some means or other, *to bring down the apostolic faith to a level with their own.* Each of these alternatives, doubtlessly, was attended with disagreeable consequences. To condemn the apostles, by representing them to have doubted of their own salvation, was awkward and unpleasant; but to condemn themselves, by admitting that believers can have no doubts respecting everlasting happiness, was still worse. The struggle ended, as has under similar circumstances generally happened, by an attempt to degrade and debase the faith of the apostles. It is now the common practice of Calvinists, to join with Arminians, in representing the personal hope of everlasting life cherished by the apostles, as having, in their own apprehension, depended on *the condition* of their final perseverance; and consequently as having been to themselves more or less *uncertain.* The editor of the Christian Herald, in the article more than once already referred to,* proves, happily enough and quite in his own way, by setting two passages of scripture at variance with one another, that the apostle Paul *was not without doubts* respecting his own future and final

* *Review of* Barclay and Thom, *on the assurance of faith,* July 1826.

destiny. "The apostle Paul could say at once, 'I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,' and 'I keep under my body and bring it unto subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' *If he,*" (the apostle Paul) "*was infallibly assured of final salvation,* the supposition of his proving a castaway operating as a motive to self-denial, evidently could not have been entertained at all."* The poor ignorant writer of this paragraph did not perceive, that, in penning it, he was chargeable with two faults: first, that of representing an inspired apostle *to have contradicted himself*; and, secondly, that of representing him *to have been uncertain respecting his eternal state.* But a charge of *self-contradiction,* and *ignorance of his own state and prospects,* thus insinuated against the great Apostle of the Gentiles, although not strictly in good taste, nor quite consistent with a profession of faith in the scriptures as the word of God, affords a striking proof of what nominal Christians will have recourse to when hard pressed,—and when they find that they have placed themselves in a false position, from which, except by such unjustifiable methods, there is no way of escaping. Dr. Burns, of Paisley, in his usual smart and flippant style, when animadverting on some of the notions of Mr. Campbell, late of Row, thus expresses his concurrence with his sceptical brother of the Christian Herald, in the view which the latter

* Ibid.

takes of the Apostle's sentiments. "Paul seems to have been 'careful' about his soul," (that is, as the context shews, not to have been without his own share of anxiety respecting his ultimate attainment of the heavenly felicity,—his hopes, according to the Dr., having been *conditional* and therefore *uncertain,*) "when 'leaving the things that were behind, he pressed forth to those things which were before,' and 'when he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection—*lest, after having preached* to others, he himself should be a castaway.'"* Whenever men, calling themselves Christians and Ministers of the Gospel, can allow themselves thus to insult the Apostles, by imputing to them *self-contradiction,* and *doubts concerning the relation in which they stood to God,* they afford to those who are *Christians indeed,* and who, as such, *are infallibly certain of possessing everlasting life,* a clue by which at once to detect the state of their minds. One, who is a Christian in reality, would feel shocked at the idea of imputing ignorance of their personal state and prospects, to those whom he acknowledges to have been the inspired ambassadors of his blessed Lord; and this because he knows that he could not do so, without giving the lie to such declarations of theirs as, WE ARE OF GOD, 1 John, cap. iv. 6; WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF GOD, v. 19, and so on. All this, however, is no impediment to one of our professed Christians now-a-days. He can gravely read passages such as those which I have just quoted,—contend loudly for the infallible inspiration of

* Gairloch heresy tried, Pages 53 and 54, 3d edition.

the apostles,—and yet, the next moment, you find him representing these same inspired personages *as having been doubtful respecting their own future prospects,*—thereby putting the *lights* and *directors* of the Christian church, upon a level with *infidels* and *sceptics!* How wonderfully does God, in the course of his adorable providence, permit unbelieving men to develope their own characters, and pronounce sentence of condemnation upon themselves. They who *have like precious faith* with the apostles, *through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,* are able and hesitate not to say with them, *we know in whom we have believed, we know that we are of God, &c.,* and like them, they *are rejoicing in hope of the glory of God;*—while those who are *doubtful,* and *fearful,* and *unbelieving,*—whose future state is to themselves *a matter of uncertainty,* and whose hopes, such as they are, *rest on conditions which never will and never can be fulfilled,*—not having the apostolic faith, as it is delineated in the sacred writings, *dare not profess it,* and are obliged, in order to obtain any quiet to their consciences, *to imagine the apostles to have possessed a faith similar to their own!* O that such persons were aware, that, to us who know the truth, they are, by all their statements and reasonings, merely manifesting the latent scepticism of their minds.

Such, then, are a few of the consequences which inevitably follow, from representing *the personal interest* of believers of the gospel in everlasting life, as being *to themselves* more or less *conditional* and therefore *uncertain.* The man who can maintain this, proves himself

to be possessed of *mere natural views of the subject,*—stigmatizes the religion of Jesus as incapable of raising its followers to a higher state of mind, and higher hopes respecting futurity, *than those which are characteristic of the sceptic and the infidel,*—and, if expressing his own experience, shews himself to be totally destitute of the apostolic faith, *which left no doubt or hesitation, in the bosoms of those who possessed it, as to present character or future prospects. Now are we the Sons of God.* 1 John iii. 2. *This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.* ii. 25. These consequences, it is impossible for any man holding the ordinary Calvinistic sentiments, to evade or get rid of. With what fearful odds against him, then, does the champion for the personal interest of believers in everlasting life being to themselves *conditional* and *uncertain,* enter the lists and challenge competition.

But it is the nature of the stag, when pushed to extremities, to turn upon his pursuers and stand at bay. In like manner the advocates of the system of *conditionality,* finding that there is no *other* way of escaping the conclusion upon which I am forcing them, and either unable or unwilling to submit, will here, perhaps, turn upon me, and meet me with the following allegation. "We grant that, in our opinion, the personal interest of the believer of the gospel in everlasting life is to himself *conditional,*—and that there is an apparent discrepancy between this fact, and his viewing the same *privilege* as bestowed *unconditionally.* But be this as

it may, the contradiction is not of our own making. *It exists in revelation itself.* The scriptures which at one time represent eternal life as being *unconditionally,* at another represent it as being *conditionally* bestowed. Take heed, therefore, to what you are about. In opposing *our sentiments,* it is not in reality *against us* you are fighting, but *against the divine testimony itself!*"

Thank you, gentlemen, for your candid admission. Now "I have you on the hip," and you shall not escape me. It is surely bad enough for any man to be a teacher of falsehood himself; but for such an one, when hard pressed, to attempt to shelter himself behind a representation of the word of God as inculcating falsehood likewise, is much worse. And what charge of falsehood, brought against the sacred writings, can be grosser or more disgusting to the Christian, than to accuse them of advancing, and forcing the human mind to acquiesce in, *statements which are admitted to be self-contradictory?* No, no, gentlemen,—this will not answer. You must find out some other and some better method of defending your cause than this, or at once abandon it in despair.

You say that the scriptures employ *conditional* as well as *unconditional* language, when speaking of the way in which eternal life is conveyed to man. Well, I am ready to concede that they do: but what then? That the *conditional* and *unconditional* phrases, which the sacred volume contains, contradict, and are incapable of being reconciled with, one another? If this shall be

the import of your answer, with whatever words you may choose to clothe it, and by whatever kind of circumlocution you may attempt to disguise your meaning, I must be excused for declining to continue the discussion with you. A charge of self-inconsistency and self-contradiction, brought against the scriptures, either directly or indirectly, being equivalent to a denial of their divine origin, deserves to meet with the same treatment at the hands of the Christian, as any other mode of insinuating or expressing infidelity.

But, it is to be supposed, that you will prefer trying some other way, than this, of extricating yourselves from your dilemma. "The fact cannot be disputed," perhaps you will say, "that *conditional*, as well as *unconditional* language, is employed by the sacred writers when speaking of eternal life. Now, although it is certain that there must exist some method of reconciling the one with the other, it is not so certain that God has revealed to us that method. Nay, for the purpose probably of trying our faith, he has left the relation of the one to the other in such a state, as to render it impossible for us, with our present imperfect measure of knowledge, ever to reconcile them. How much better for us, then, leaving the question with regard to the mode of reconciling them unsettled, to continue to use them in the same way that scripture itself does." On this somewhat plausible manner of evading the difficulty, I have to make the following observations. First. Had Calvinistic, and other ordinary professors of religion, *applied* the *conditional* and *unconditional* language of

scripture respecting eternal life, in the same way that scripture itself does, they never would have been the objects of my censure. My complaint against them is, that, in their ignorance, they are accustomed to make use of and apply both kinds of phrases, in a way totally different from that of the sacred writers, and that by so doing they completely pervert their meaning. Secondly. What a curious idea must those persons have of the sacred volume and the human mind, when they represent the former as proposing, to the belief of mankind, views and statements which, whatever they may be in reality, *must have the appearance of being self-contradictory when received and acquiesced in!* Thirdly. It is not true that the scriptures have left us unfurnished with the means of reconciling the *conditional*, with the *unconditional* language which they employ, when treating of the subject of eternal life. On the contrary, if there is one circumstance connected with the sacred volume clearer than another, it is the relation in which *conditional* stand to *unconditional* views of eternal life. This there is no difficulty whatever in proving.

Here let me observe, that it cannot fail to strike even a very ordinary reader of the scriptures, that they appear to consist chiefly of a series of experiments on human nature, conducted on a grand scale. Man has been, according to that wonderful book, placed in a variety of circumstances,—has had a variety of duties prescribed to him,—and has been subjected to a variety of trials;—and with ample details of his behaviour under these circumstances, and in relation to these duties and

trials, we are by it furnished. Now it is plain, that these experiments cannot have had it for their object, to impart any information to the Supreme Being himself. He who is infinite in wisdom, and *who knows the end from the beginning*, can receive no accession of knowledge from the existence and conduct of his creatures. The experiments, therefore, must have been made, for the sake of the knowledge which was thereby to be imparted to intelligent creatures themselves. It is impossible for any reflecting mind to dispute this.

This being premised, I observe farther, that the explanation of the fact which has so much puzzled our religious wise-acres, is simply this,—that *conditions* of eternal life have been prescribed, and *conditional* language respecting eternal life has been employed in the sacred writings, as the only means by which, situated and constituted as mankind are, they could have been brought to comprehend, that *there are no conditions whatever in the matter*, and that *eternal life is and must be unconditionally bestowed.*

Paradoxical as, at first sight, the foregoing proposition may appear, the proof of it is extremely easy. It is derived from an observation of the circumstances in which *conditions of eternal life have been prescribed*, and of the person by whom *those conditions have been fulfilled*, and may be thus stated. 1st. Although conditions of eternal life have, in every age, been proposed to the human race, no mere man has ever yet been able to fulfil them; and, 2dly, the conditions of eternal life, which man has shewn himself unable to fulfil, have

been fulfilled by God manifested in the flesh. The whole argument, both premises and conclusion, may be thus expressed. As the minds of men *naturally* are cast in a *conditional* mould, to whatever subject they might be directed, it was requisite to meet and satisfy their apprehensions by *the proposal and fulfilment of conditions.* But eternal life is, in reality, *unconditionally bestowed.* In what other way, then, could this latter idea be introduced into a mind naturally fitted *to take conditional views of things*,—or, in what other way could *the naturally conditional notions of such a mind be satisfied and yet the truth be apprehended by it*,—except, in the first place, *negatively*, by shewing it, that *man himself could not perform the conditions required;* and, in the second place, *positively*, by shewing it, that *the conditions had actually been fulfilled, by the same glorious personage by whom they had been prescribed; His own fulfilment of the conditions of the blessing, being, in so far as we are concerned, equivalent to His bestowing upon us the blessing unconditionally.* My readers, however, will be more likely to understand me, after having gone over and reflected on the following amplified statement.

1. My first proof of the *conditional* language of scripture concerning eternal life, being subservient to *unconditional* views of the subject, is derived from the fact of the total want of success which has invariably attended every effort, on the part of man, to fulfil the prescribed conditions of enjoying that glorious privilege.

An intelligent being, concerning whom it is emphatically declared that he was *of the earth earthy*, having been created, and *God having breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*,—the *continuance*, or, if you will, the *eternity* of the life thus conferred upon him, was made to depend on his non-violation of *a single* prohibition imposed on him by his maker. The *eternity of natural life*, was thus, in the strictest sense of the term, rendered *conditional*; and upon man's conduct in reference to the condition thus prescribed to him, was made to depend the solution of the double problem, first, *whether our earthly or animal existence could be eternal*, and, secondly, *whether eternal life could be conditional*. Nor was the matter permitted to hang long in suspense. No sooner was the suitable temptation presented, than a prohibition requiring so little as almost to merit the appellation of trifling, was violated—*the necessarily limited duration of our earthly existence*, and *the impossibility of eternal life being attained to conditionally on the part of the creature*, being both thereby distinctly and unequivocally proved. Not satisfied, however, with having afforded us a single although of itself demonstrative proof of this, God has made use of the conduct of succeeding generations, to attest to us still farther the principle so strikingly exemplified in the case of our common progenitors. In order *practically* to meet and obviate the objection, that *Adam transgressed from sheer inadvertency*, and that *mankind instructed and put on their guard by what befel him, would, if similarly circumstanced, act a very*

different part, every opportunity has been afforded to them of rectifying his mistake. Eternal life has been since, as it is still, proposed as a prize to be contended for by human merit; and the import of the promise made to mankind has all along been, as it still is, that if they keep the commandments, they shall enter into life upon the footing of their own obedience. But, alas! the history of the human race since the fall, has merely been a series of melancholy proofs, that Adam, in transgressing, exemplified the general rule and not the exception. Human nature, from his time, instead of improving, went on deteriorating; or rather, properly speaking, began to give more and more decided manifestations of its innate vileness and worthlessness. Men, instead of learning a lesson of caution and circumspection from their ancestor's first transgression and its consequences, proceeded to sin against God *with a high hand.* And the result was, what might have been anticipated. Grievous crimes were visited with deservedly severe punishments. The iniquities of the ante-diluvian world, occasioned an almost entire extirpation of the human race. The abominations of Sodom and Gomorrah, brought down fire and brimstone from heaven upon their ungodly inhabitants. The idolatry and impurity of the Canaanites, were in due time punished by their becoming monuments of the divine vengeance. Still, however, had matters stopped here, it might have been objected, that the profligacy and criminality of the Gentile world, sprang from their having been left to the dictates of their own consciences; and that had God separated a class

of persons from the rest of the world,—endowed them with peculiar privileges,—and fenced them round with peculiar institutions,—different results might have followed. Well, this supposed objection was also anticipated, and practically answered. The natural posterity of Abraham were selected, from among the rest of the human race, to be a peculiar people unto God,—privileges of the most important kind were conferred on them,—and laws, chiefly external and on that account on natural principles more easily complied with, were prescribed to them. But all these extremely favourable circumstances, could not prevent the weakness and wickedness of human nature, from making itself fearfully apparent, even among the Jews. How cutting the appeal made to them by the mouth of the prophet, *which of my laws have ye not broken?* and how grievous the accusation brought against them by the apostle, that in consequence of the enormity of their offences, *the name of God* had actually been *blasphemed among the heathen.* But above all, how appalling the guilt contracted by them, in rejecting and crucifying *the Lord of Glory.*—One possible objection more remained, and this it was requisite practically to meet and get rid of. It might have been alleged, that in consequence of God giving a still higher manifestation of himself to man, than that with which he had indulged the Jewish nation,—that *by putting his laws into the minds, and writing them in the hearts of human beings,*—the existence of evil in them might be destroyed; and a means of attaining to everlasting life by their own merits might be

imparted. Well, this opportunity of retrieving matters has, likewise, been offered to man,—but with exactly the same result as in all the preceding cases. They to whom *the truth as it is in Jesus* has been made known, and in whom, thereby, a spiritual and supernatural principle has been implanted, find themselves constrained to acknowledge, with one of their number, that *in them, that is, in their flesh, there dwelleth no good thing:* or, in other words, that instead of a knowledge of the gospel having enabled them to get rid of evil, one of the most important effects of the enlightening of their understandings has been, to discover to them its deep-rooted and deep-seated existence; and consequently to satisfy them of the utter impossibility of inheriting eternal life by their own doings. With the strongest of all inducements to comply with the precepts of their heavenly Father, and to maintain an incessant struggle against evil, Christians are obliged to confess, that *there is a law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members;* and that they can perceive no prospect, while on earth, of being freed from the snares and annoyance of this domestic enemy. The scriptures thus holding out eternal life as necessarily connected with perfect righteousness of character,—and yet the whole history of man, in all the varied circumstances in which he has been placed, *without law, under law,* and *raised above law,* consisting of a series of proofs, rising in intensity the one above the other, that man neither has been, is, nor will be possessed of this

perfect righteousness,—what is the fair conclusion from such premises? God having proposed eternal life as a blessing to be inherited by man, in the event of his performing a certain condition or certain conditions,—and man neither having fulfilled, nor being able to fulfil, the condition or conditions,—what pray follows? God cannot mock His creatures, nor can He act without an aim or object; and what, then, is it, that by all these scriptural and practical lessons of moral inability,—all these proofs that *the carnal mind is enmity to God,*—He can be supposed, consistently with His own word, to be aiming at? Why, there is but one object conceivable, and that is,—that *conditions* of eternal life have in every age been prescribed to man, not that *man might fulfil them,* but that, by being satisfied, in consequence of repeated failures, *of his own total inability to fulfil them,* the impossibility of eternal life depending on *conditions* to be fulfilled by the creature, and the necessity of its springing *unconditionally* from the Creator, might to his mind, *in a negative way,* be rendered strikingly and incontrovertibly manifest.

"Of all that wisdom dictates this the drift,
That man is dead in sin, and life a gift."*

The subserviency of *the conditional language of scripture,* to views of eternal life as *unconditionally bestowed,* is proved still farther,

2, By the fact, that all *the conditions* of eternal life have been fulfilled by God himself manifested in the flesh.

* Cowper's *Truth.*

To speak of the fulfilment of *the conditions of enjoying a privilege*, as a proof, and the strongest proof too, that the privilege is, in reality, *unconditionally enjoyed*, will no doubt at first appear to be the very acmé of paradox; and yet before I have done, I hope to be able to shew, to the satisfaction of some at least, that nothing can be more true. Beings whose nature was *of the earth earthy*, had been placed in a great variety of circumstances; and in all of them had afforded evidence the most decisive, that they were inadequate to the task of acquiring, for themselves, a title to eternal life. They had been placed in *a sinless state*,—after the entrance of sin, they had been *left to themselves, for a while, without law*,—and finally they had been *subjected to the restraints of law:* but all had been of no avail; for, in every one of these different states, they had been chargeable with violating the dictates of conscience. Nay, the last of these states, viz., that of subjection to the law of Moses, instead of being that in which the conduct of men had been the most deserving of approbation, had in fact been the one in which the evils of their hearts, and the diabolical passions of their nature, had become most appallingly manifest. It was during the subsistence and currency of this last state of things, that that grand interposition of God himself, which in one shape or another constitutes the subject matter of the sacred volume, took place. God *was manifested in the flesh*,—undertook *in fashion as a man* to exhibit that perfection of righteousness, in all his efforts to attain to which man had completely and signally failed,

—and bound Himself, by the fulfilment of every condition of everlasting life, to become *Himself* the channel of its conveyance to the human race. *What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,* or earthy nature of the first man,—the second man *the Lord from heaven,* appearing *in the likeness of sinful flesh,* fully and gloriously accomplished. It had been proved, by the series of experiments which I have already detailed, that a state of existence upon earth was, by its very nature, *unfitted to be eternal.* In the strictest conformity with the result of these experiments, *the eternal life* which the Son of God inherited, was not an unlimited continuation or prolongation of *life upon earth;* for, the very perfection of his righteous character having required him to sacrifice *the life* which, in common with mankind, he was first manifested in the possession of, he rose to the possession of *an eternal life,* which, so far from having been a restoration of his earthly existence, was *a life of a much superior kind,* enjoyed by him at God's right hand, and in His own immediate presence for evermore. It had also been proved, by the series of experiments alluded to, that eternal life could not be inherited *conditionally by the creature.* Here it is that, in order to the reconciling of scripture with itself, it becomes absolutely necessary to understand, that the Lord Jesus was not *a creature,* but *the Creator himself manifested as a creature.* Had he been the former, his fulfilment of the conditions of eternal life would have contradicted all the lessons which, previous to his appearance, God had been teaching. The import of these

lessons we have seen to be, that *no creature could fulfil such conditions;* and yet, if the Lord Jesus was a creature, *a creature after all did fulfil them.* God's word, however, like himself, being thoroughly self-consistent, this cannot be. The conditions of eternal life were fulfilled; but he who fulfilled them was not the person *to whom they had been originally prescribed;* on the contrary, He was the very Being himself *by whom they had been prescribed.* The same lesson, therefore, which had been taught *negatively* before Christ's appearance, was now taught *positively* by his appearance, that eternal life was not to be inherited *in virtue of conditions to be fulfilled by the creature.* But how, it will be asked, is this consistent with a view of eternal life, as inherited *unconditionally?* The consistency of the one with the other is seen by considering, on the one hand, the constitution of the human mind; and on the other, the subject matter in which mankind were to be instructed. The mind of man is cast naturally in *a conditional mould;* or, throwing metaphor aside, is fitted naturally to acquire *conditional apprehensions of things.* As it was declared to Adam, immediately after his creation, that the continuation of the life which he originally had should *depend on terms or conditions,*—so his posterity, possessed of an understanding and capacities similar to his, find themselves irresistibly impelled to regard the enjoyment of blessings of a spiritual description, as *depending on terms or conditions* likewise. Now the mind, as every tyro in metaphysics cannot but be aware, is totally incapable of receiving instructions *concerning*

what it does not know, except through the medium *of what it does know.* Constituted, then, as the human mind is, it was impossible for God, (I speak reverently, and upon scriptural principles), if he intended to communicate to men views of his character *superior to those which naturally they were capable of acquiring,* to communicate these views otherwise than *through the medium of the views which they naturally had.* He behoved to make use of their *natural* capacities and their *natural* modes of conceiving of things, as the means, and the only means, of elevating them to *supernatural* capacities and *supernatural* conceptions. Now it is assumed, that the object of the Supreme Being actually was, to give to His intelligent creatures a view of His character *superior* to that which they *naturally* had, and which they were *naturally* capable of acquiring. That instead of leaving them under the impression, that benefits could be enjoyed by them only in the event of their *earning them at His hands,* or of their *performing certain prescribed conditions,*—His intention was to convince them, that He conferred His benefits upon those who had *no right or title to them,* or that His mode of dealing with the children of men *was in reality unconditional.* How, in this case, was He to proceed? By presenting to them views, totally and irreconcilably at variance with their *natural* notions of things? Certainly not; unless He intended to convey no idea to their minds at all. He could only accomplish His object by so availing Himself of their *natural* modes of conception, and by so accommodating his revelation of *Himself to*

these, as to satisfy them,—and by satisfying them, to prepare the way for raising the mind to *something superior*. He could only accomplish his object by making *natural* notions, the stepping-stones or ladders, if I may so express myself, to such as are *supernatural*. Now this is the very principle upon which, throughout the scriptures, God has proceeded. Man *naturally* can only conceive of *creatures*. God, therefore, meets and accommodates Himself to man's *natural* notions, by manifesting Himself to him *as a creature:* not that man may mistake God *for a creature*, but as the only possible means of elevating the mind of man to notions of God *as the Creator*. So, again, man *naturally* can only form conceptions of benefits *as conferred on him conditionally*. God, therefore, in this case likewise meets and accommodates Himself to man's natural notions, by revealing Himself as both *prescribing and performing conditions of eternal life:* not, however, that man may suppose God to bestow eternal life *conditionally*, but as the only way in which, agreeably to the constitution of the human mind, God can elevate man to the idea of eternal life being conferred *unconditionally*. The conditions of eternal life are prescribed, and man finds that he cannot fulfil them. This is so far striking,—and yet it is merely preparatory to what follows. God himself appears clothed with flesh and fulfils them. Now, what is the plain and legitimate inference from all this, but that as God himself is *the fulfiller as well as the prescriber of the conditions of everlasting life*, it is His intention to be known as *the all and in all of man's*

salvation? Or, in other words, that he employs all this as the medium of shewing eternal life, like every other blessing, to *proceed unconditionally from himself;* and to be in no respect whatever dependent on *conditions fulfilled or to be fulfilled by man.* How gently, without the slightest violence offered to the natural constitution or notions of the human mind, and yet how completely, do those, to whom the understanding of the subject is thus vouchsafed, find themselves all at once elevated from *conditional* to *unconditional views respecting eternal life.* The natural cravings of their minds after *the fulfilment of conditions* have been satisfied, aye, and more than satisfied; for God himself being once seen to have fulfilled the conditions, these cravings are, if I may so express myself, *completely exhausted;*—what their minds naturally longed for, being merely the fulfilment of conditions *by the creature,* and the view presented to them in the scriptures being that of conditions fulfilled *by the Creator:*—but the idea of God himself *having fulfilled the conditions of eternal life,* immediately and necessarily suggests the ulterior and higher idea, that so far from there existing, properly speaking or in reality, *conditions of eternal life at all,* the whole is the divinely appointed medium of instructing us in the fact, that eternal life is *bestowed upon us unconditionally.* For when the Creator fulfils, in our behalf, those very conditions of enjoying a benefit which He himself has prescribed, can He adopt a more impressive method of acquainting us that we are indebted for the benefit *to Himself alone;* or a more effectual way

of banishing from our minds the idea, that we are indebted for it in any respect whatever *to ourselves?* Does any reader still find himself at a loss to understand, how it is that *the conditional language of scripture,* is the grand medium of bringing out *the unconditionality of the blessings of eternal life?* Let him try again if, by considering the following brief condensation of the preceding argument, he cannot succeed better. The mind of man *naturally,* is qualified to view benefits only as *conditionally enjoyed.* But the view to be introduced into it, is that of a benefit which is *unconditionally enjoyed.* Now, how can this be accomplished, except through the medium of something common, both *to the natural notions of the mind,* and *to the supernatural view which it is intended to introduce?* This *desideratum,*—this all-important *middle term,*—the scriptures shew us has been found in the fact, that a person in the form of a creature *has fulfilled the conditions of eternal life:* the natural capacity of the human mind to conceive of benefits only as *conditionally bestowed* being thus met and satisfied;—and the circumstance of the person who *has fulfilled these conditions* being the Creator himself, whose revealed character it is that He confers His favours *freely* or *unconditionally,* meeting and satisfying the other requisite, that a view of eternal life as *unconditionally enjoyed* should be communicated. How astonishing thus to discover *the unconditionality of eternal life,* imparted to the human mind by means of *conditionality,*—the only way in which it was capable of apprehending the subject. Well may we exclaim with the apostle,

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Rom. xi. 33.

Such, my Calvinistic friends, is the relation subsisting between *the conditional language* contained in, and *the unconditional ideas* suggested by the scriptures. The one does not contradict the other; but the one is, from the constitution of the human mind and the circumstances in which mankind are placed, employed as the means of bringing out, explaining, and communicating the other. I do not ask you whether you can furnish me with a better account of the matter, because I know that no other account of it, which will be satisfactory, can be had. But I beg leave to tell you that if, after the explanation which has just been given, you continue to use *the conditional phraseology* of scripture, in such a way as to make it contradict *the unconditionality of eternal life,* you want that plea of ignorance of which you formerly might have availed yourselves. I have shewn you, that not merely is *conditional language* reconcileable with views of the blessing in question as *unconditionally bestowed,* but that there exists the strictest harmony and consistency between the one and the other. *Conditions* of eternal life were prescribed to man,—that man, by dire experience, might learn his complete inability to fulfil them. And *these conditions* were in due time fulfilled by God himself manifest in the flesh,—as the only means by which man, constituted as he is, could be elevated to the conception of eternal life as a blessing *freely* or *unconditionally bestowed.*

Now so long as you, my Calvinistic friends, employ *conditions* and *conditional language*, for the purpose of convincing your fellow men, that they neither have performed nor can perform *any conditions of eternal life at all*,—be assured that neither I, nor any other lover of the genuine gospel, will or dare find fault with you. When persons come to you, and in all the pride of unmortified self-righteousness inquire, "what shall we do that we may inherit eternal life?" should your answer be, "*if ye will enter into life keep the commandments;*" or, if you will enjoy the blessing which you aim at, *love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbours as yourselves*," Luke x. 27; having the highest of all authority for what you prescribe, you may safely set the censures of puny mortals at defiance. To send the proud and presumptuous, on the hopeless errand of working out a perfect righteousness of their own,—as the only condition on which they can acquire for themselves a title to everlasting life,—is, in the course of God's adorable providence, one of the appointed means of carrying home to the hearts and consciences of such persons, a practical conviction of their arrogance and folly. See, however, that it is in this scriptural way, and upon these scriptural principles, you make use of and enforce *conditions* of everlasting life. Do not, as has been hitherto the almost invariable practice of Calvinists, attempt to mix up *conditionality* with *unconditionality*. It is impossible for the two to amalgamate. Not more distinguished from each other

are light and darkness, than is a blessing which flows solely and exclusively from *the sovereign good pleasure of the Creator*, from one which is, in any respect whatever, the result of *requisites possessed or conditions performed by the creature.* Take care, then, that you do not tell your hearers, either in so many words, or by implication, that although they may not be able to keep *all* the commandments of God, they are able at least to keep *some* of them;—that although they may not be able to love God *entirely*, they are able at least to love him *to a certain degree;*—and that although God does require *perfect obedience*, and *perfect love*, as the only *conditions* on which he will bestow *eternal life*, He is *nevertheless disposed to recede so far from the strictness of His requirements, as to be ready to bestow it as the reward of sincere although imperfect obedience!* O! it is language, or at least suggestions, such as the foregoing, which,—by rendering your notions self-contradictory, and by representing God as a changeling and a liar,—cause *serious religion*, as it is called, to stink in the nostrils of the shrewd and discerning infidel. God demands from man *every thing*, or *nothing.* He will not be put off with a tithe or composition for what is His due. He must have *perfect obedience* on the part of man if eternal life is to be *a reward;*—man's *imperfect obedience*, as the foundation of the blessing, being altogether out of the question. Now, as I have already endeavoured to shew and as I again repeat, the use which God makes of *conditions* and *conditional language*, is to attract the notice of man to the fact, that

perfect obedience,—the only condition of eternal life,— lies beyond his power; and, consequently, to give a death blow to his hopes of eternal life, derived from that quarter. If, however, you teach him that he can contribute, or that he requires to contribute *any thing* towards his own salvation,—call it faith, or works, or preparatory exercises, it matters not what, and this, after having allowed, either *directly* or *indirectly*, that he is not called upon or expected to contribute *every thing* towards it,—you are actually labouring to contradict God's design, for you are doing what in you lies to confirm in man, his *conditional* and *natural* ideas respecting eternal life. It is God's object,—both by shewing us our inability to fulfil the conditions of eternal life, and by shewing us these conditions fulfilled by Himself clothed with our nature,—to *subvert* and *destroy* in us *conditional* views of the subject: but if the object or tendency of your statements and reasonings be, to *strengthen* in us such conditional views, will you venture to affirm that you speak agreeably to *the lively oracles?* Make use, then, of *conditions* and *conditional language*, as one means of leading man to see eternal life *unconditionally* bestowed on him through the Son of God, and there is nothing self-contradictory in your procedure: but employ *conditions* and *conditional language*, for the purpose of confirming in man the impression so natural to him, that something, call it what you will, *must be performed by himself personally before he can be a partaker of everlasting life*, and you contradict the scriptures, nay, as a Calvinist, you contradict yourself; for your

language sometimes being, that God bestows eternal life *unconditionally*, the moment you represent *any condition* as requiring to be fulfilled by the creature, you plunge into the mire of self-inconsistency. Would to God that men, who profess to regard eternal life as being simply *a divine gift*, would but learn to speak and write consistently with themselves; and would not mar their own statements, by insisting on *the possession or performance of conditions by ourselves, as being requisite in order to our enjoyment of the blessing. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.* Rom. xiv. 22.



CHAPTER V.

ETERNAL LIFE THE GIFT OF GOD NOW TO US WHO BELIEVE.

I cannot allow any evidence of the world's creation by ONE, whom the scripture alone describes and calls JEHOVAH, and of man's creation in his image,—or of the fall—of the law—of sin,—of death as the wages thereof,—of Christ—of judgment—of heaven—or of hell,—but only that equal and infallible evidence thereof which God affords me in his word.——To me the word of God is good for all, or good for nothing at all. If sufficient to *charge* my conscience with sin and death, so also in like manner to *discharge* my conscience from both.——If I am told that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; am I not also and in the same breath told, that by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous? If I am assured, that by nature all men were equally children of wrath, am I not equally assured, that by faith all who believe are now the children of God? for it is written, "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1 John v. 1. Wherefore, I cannot believe that Jesus is the Christ, without believing as certainly that I am born of God; unless, indeed, I believe God to be a liar in the latter clause of the sentence, whom I hold to be true in the former. HIS WORD IS EQUALLY PLEDGED TO ME FOR BOTH. WITHOUT THE WORD, IT IS AS HARD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE ONE AS THE OTHER. WITHOUT THE WORD, WE KNOW NOTHING OF EITHER. IF YOU ADMIT THE WORD, BOTH ARE EQUALLY CERTAIN. BARCLAY on the assurance of faith.

From the censure which I have felt myself obliged to pronounce on the vast majority of Calvinists, it is with the greatest pleasure that I except the followers of John Barclay. Amid that wide waste of inconsistent and self-contradictory statements, respecting the principle

on which God confers eternal life, which, in perusing ordinary Calvinistic productions, every where meets the eye,—the views adopted by the few despised individuals just alluded to, and by some kindred sects, are found, the moment that they arrest attention, to afford refreshment to the spiritually enlightened mind. Like other Calvinists, the Bereans, for so are Mr. Barclay's followers denominated, hold eternal life to be *the gift of God:* but, unlike those with whom in other respects they are associated, they hold that all who in truth believe this to be the case, believe also, and with equal certainty, that eternal life is *the gift of God to themselves personally.* They cannot allow it to be possible for a man, who, in reality and on the footing of the divine testimony, regards eternal life as *unconditionally bestowed,* to be at the same time labouring under doubts and fears *respecting his own personal interest in the blessing*; and this, because they perceive, that such doubts can only spring from regarding it as *conditionally bestowed.* "How," they argue, "can any rational being, at one and the same moment, be holding the two opposite sides of a gross and glaring contradiction?" Bereans do not make the belief of the divine testimony concerning the work of Christ Jesus, to be the belief of *a may-be* or *peradventure salvation to themselves,* as I have shewn that the other classes of Calvinists, however much they may attempt to disguise their sentiments, actually do; but taking scripture and the confession of the apostolic churches for their guides, they unhesitatingly proclaim, in their own name and in that of their fellow believers,

this is the record, that God HATH GIVEN TO US *eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* How sweet,—how refreshing,—to have the light of truth thus breaking in upon us, from amidst the thick, the almost "felt" darkness which every where prevails around. Such men as Dr. Burns of Paisley, may sneer at, what he is pleased to denominate, "the bold and unshrinking assurance of Bereans;"* and may, from the circumstance of the very small number of those who in any age have possessed or professed the apostolic faith, always calculate on having the laugh of the majority on his side: but the only feelings, which the objects of his contempt cherish towards him in return, are those of deep compassion; and an earnest desire that, if consistent with the divine will, he may yet come, in so far as respects the faith of the gospel, to be "altogether such as they are." Dear fellow Christians, how my heart warms towards you. You may not recognize me as a brother; nay, you may fancy that, in holding many of the sentiments which are developed and insisted on in these pages, I have gone far astray from the truth, and have wandered far into the by-paths of error and delusion; but whatever may be your feelings towards me, *I love,—I cannot help loving you.* Professing as you do to believe the truth, I love you *for the truth's sake* thereby manifested *to dwell in you; and which,* as dwelling in you, *shall be with you for ever.* 2 John 2. Of course, I am satisfied that you have not yet advanced so far as

* Gairloch heresy tried, page 54. 3rd Edition.

you might have done;—that there are many views of Christianity not yet apprehended by you, by means of which your own leading sentiments might have been rendered still more consistent with scripture, and with themselves, than at the present moment they can appear to you to be:—but whatever may be in this, your minds have been opened to understand that which constitutes *the truth*,—you have seen the work of Christ *finished in your behalf*, the blood of Jesus *cleansing you from all sin*, and *yourselves partakers of eternal life through the second Adam*, as certainly as *you are partakers of natural life through the first*;—and thus possessing that principle of *holiness* which consists in the knowledge of God's character *as love*, and which wherever it exists separates or distinguishes from an unbelieving world, why should I quarrel with you, because you may not see and think in all respects as I do? As persons who *are justified by faith*, and *have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, can we not, putting our differences for a moment aside, rejoice together in the joint possession of privileges so glorious? Can we not rejoice together, as jointly capable of entering into and understanding the apostolic experience? But even should you refuse to join with me in using the language of mutual exultation, this shall not prevent me from congratulating you as dear brethren *in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*,—as knowing the truth concerning him here, and as heirs of his glory hereafter.

How it moves one's spleen to think of the neglect with which Mr. Barclay has been treated. With what clear-

ness, force, and simplicity, has he, both in his treatise on "the Assurance of Faith," and in his still more ably written but less known production, entitled "Without Faith, without God," developed his peculiar sentiments; indeed, what a refreshing air of candour and originality breathes throughout his works; and yet, although these have now been sixty years before the public, how slight the notice which they have attracted. During the long period just mentioned, the religious world in England and Scotland, has been literally deluged with theological systems and theological trash. One pretender after another has ascended the stage; has proposed to vend his nostrums to men already drugged and stupified, by the potions administered to them, by his predecessors in the line of cant and delusion; and in exact proportion to the ignorance and folly of those to whom he has addressed himself, and the skill with which he has adapted his statements to their natural notions and prejudices, has he met with a hearty and admiring reception. Persons who, spiritually considered, are fools themselves, *have received such fools gladly.* 2 Corinth. xi. 19. And yet, all the while, the writings of one of the ablest and profoundest theologians of his day,—at all events, of a man who was intimately acquainted with the scriptures, and who was the first to give a clear and self consistent exposition of the effects produced by the truth upon the conscience,—have been thrown aside, and postponed to the claim to be heard advanced by every sciolist, every novice, who has chosen to obtrude his pretentions upon an ignorant and deceived world.

No doubt *some* attention has been paid to Mr. Barclay and his works: but, soaring as his sentiments do above the *natural* notions of the human mind, when *natural* men have been obliged to advert to them, it has been merely for the purpose of dismissing them with such brief and contemptuous notices, as appear in M'Lean's "Christ's Commission," and Wardlaw's "Essay on the Assurance of Faith."* The writers just named, mere dwarfs, to say no worse of them, in so far as respects religion, have discharged their shafts of *human reasonings* at a man cased in the panoply of *divine truth;* and because the giant uninjured has disdained to retort upon them their petty warfare, they have fancied themselves warranted, forsooth, to indulge in the songs and shouts of victory! The fact is, however, that the period has not yet arrived, for appreciating the worth and importance of Mr. Barclay's sentiments. He lived, if I may so express myself, several centuries before his time. Like many others he wrote, not for his contemporaries, but for posterity. *Non suis, sed posteris, vixit.* If his works are not voluminous, like those of the Sibyl they are at least invaluable. On the subjects of *the ground of believing the divine testimony,* and *the fact of our belief of that testimony necessarily implying a belief that we ourselves personally are interested in its de-*

* Without intending any offence to Dr. Wardlaw, I may just hint to that gentleman, that, in his *Essay on the Assurance of Faith,* he has, with but a very slight alteration, borrowed and made use of one of the finest passages of Mr. Barclay, without any acknowledgment of the source from which he derived it. By glancing his eye over the motto of this chapter, he will understand me.

clarations and promises, he has not had his equal since the days of Luther. Nay, I confidently appeal to those who, possessing a scriptural knowledge of religion themselves, have perused with care Luther's treatise on the epistle to the Galatians, and have been struck at the close resemblance between the views of that eminent reformer and those of Mr. Barclay respecting *the nature and assurance of faith,* if the latter, on this subject, be not by far the more distinct and self-consistent of the two? And yet this is the man whose sentiments Messrs. M'Lean and Wardlaw have considered themselves justified in treating with contempt! Belief of personal interest in the blood of Christ, *founded directly on the testimony of God and therefore amounting to absolute certainty,* is, in their opinion, a doctrine too absurd to merit a formal refutation! Well, after all, what is there in this which we might not have anticipated? The more that any man is possessed of and speaks according to *the spirit of God,* as he must recede the more from the ordinary standard of *human* notions and apprehensions, what can he expect, but that his views shall be misunderstood and misinterpreted by *a world which lieth in ignorance and wickedness?** Were he of the world, and to speak according to the world, the world of course would receive and approve of him; but because he is not of the world, and speaks not according to the world, can he be surprised at the world's opposition to himself and his

* See 1st Corinth. ii. 14.

sentiments? When *the mind of man* attempts to bring down *the mind of God,* or *the truths which God has revealed in the scriptures,* to the level of its own narrow and limited capacities, it *must* condemn them,—there being no way in which divine truth can be received, except by its enlarging our capacities and raising them thereby to a level with itself. Once, like Messrs. M'Lean and Wardlaw, did I imagine, that the views of Mr. Barclay, respecting *the assurance of faith,* were so absurd and extravagant as to be unworthy of notice; and under that impression I despised them. But, to borrow Dr. Johnson's language, when speaking of Law's "Serious Call," on comparing Barclay with the scriptures, "I found that he was an overmatch for me."* It was by means of the views with which he furnished me, that, for the first time, I came to see those scriptures gloriously consistent with themselves. And I may hint to Dr. Wardlaw, (what, had he been still alive, I should have hinted likewise to Mr. Archibald M'Lean), that, long after he and his works shall have been consigned to oblivion, or only remembered as specimens of the attempts which, in every period of the church, have been made to bring down the truths of the gospel to the level of the *natural* and *carnal* notions of mankind, Mr. Barclay's writings will be prized, as among the most remarkable instances of *light shining in a dark place,* which the last or the present age has produced.

* Boswell's Life of Johnson.

It has already been shewn *indirectly,* in the immediately preceding chapter, that belief in eternal life *as unconditionally bestowed,* necessarily implies belief in it *as bestowed on ourselves personally.* I now propose, however, to establish this point *directly,* by proofs and evidences of a positive kind; and in doing so, to avail myself of those clear and self-consistent views of the subject, which Mr. Barclay* was the first to give. Nor is this so far aside from the scope of the present chapter, as, to the superficial reader, it may at first sight appear to be. For, in the knowledge of *God's character as love,* apprehended in the light of *the love which he beareth towards us,* 1 John iv. 8—10, 19, actually consists THE PRESENT POSSESSION OF EVERLASTING LIFE. John xi. 25, 26. xvii. 3. 1 John v. 20. To prove the possession of *the knowledge of God's character,* then, being to prove the possession of *this divine and heavenly principle,* I shall direct all my efforts to establish the position, that *belief of the divine testimony,* necessarily

* None of my readers will, I hope, fall into the mistake of confounding the John Barclay, of Edinburgh, of whom I am speaking, who lived and died *in the course of last century,* with the celebrated *Apologist of Quakerism,* Robert Barclay, of Urie, who flourished *during the century preceding.* Although obliged to dissent from many of the statements of the latter, I have no hesitation in admitting, that he likewise was a very extraordinary man. The perusal of his well-known work, on the principles and practices of the Quakers, has deeply interested me. I may here state, by the way, that although this fifth chapter of my work was written without any particular reference to Quakerism, the view contained in it, respecting *the way in which the scriptures come to be believed as the word of God,* will be found indirectly to answer the main points insisted on in Barclay of Urie's 2d and 3d propositions concerning *immediate revelation* and *the scriptures,* as well as to throw light on the causes which led to the adoption of many of his sentiments.

implies *belief of our own personal interest in the blessings which it proclaims.* This, however, is not a matter to be accomplished all at once. In order to do justice to the subject, as well as to obviate a number of cavils which might otherwise be started, it will be necessary, before proceeding to discuss the topic with which we are more immediately concerned, to go somewhat farther back in our investigations, than ordinary thinkers may be prepared for.

My readers will be better able to understand the plan of the subsequent part of this chapter, by being informed, that Mr. Barclay's theory, so far adopted by me, may be thus summed up. "There are three things which always and necessarily enter the mind together. First, the knowledge or belief of God; secondly, the knowledge or belief of God as a testifier; and, thirdly, the knowledge or belief of God's testimony as having a reference to ourselves personally:* this threefold knowledge or belief, one part of which it is impossible to separate from another, constituting the earnest and first fruits of life everlasting." Each part of this theory is susceptible of a proof, which, to the members of the family of God, is nothing short of demonstration itself. To the bringing out of the various parts of this theory, and the statement of it as a whole, I now address myself.

* In other words, *the testimony of God can only be received, or God as a testifier can only be believed in,* in the light, through the medium, and on the ground, of *the personal interest which we ourselves have in His testimony.*

Almost all theological systems, and that of Calvin among the rest, set out with admitting the truth of *natural religion*, or, *the possibility of the existence of a knowledge of God, which does not derive its origin from the information concerning himself, with which he has furnished us in his word.* According to the authors and abettors of such systems, there are certain notices or ideas of the Supreme Being, which so far from having the scriptures for their origin, actually exist previous to, distinct from, and independent of any knowledge of God which the scriptures impart: that, to use their own phraseology, such notices or ideas are stamped and impressed on *the natural conscience;* and that they constitute the principles to which the scriptures themselves appeal in proof of their divine character and authority. Against this, as the grand stronghold of falsehood and error in the department of religion, Mr. Barclay in his different works, and especially in his "Without Faith, without God," has directed the full force of his scriptural and masterly reasonings; and it must be acknowledged by every genuine follower of the Lamb, acquainted with his writings and capable of appreciating their value, that he has been completely successful in demolishing it.

The existence of *natural,* as contradistinguished from *revealed* religion, the clear, philosophical, and spiritually enlightened mind of Barclay, perceived to be a mere hypothesis, equally opposed both to *fact* and to *scripture.*

To fact. The principle laid down and contended for by the advocates of *natural religion* is, that there exist

in the consciences of all mankind, as they come into the world, certain ideas of notices of God, by means of which,—even if left to themselves, and totally destitute of all reading, teaching, or information from others,—they would discover the existence and various attributes of the Supreme Being. This, Mr. Barclay positively denied. With him, in his denial of the alleged fact, I fully coincide; and in order to bring the matter to a very brief issue, all that I ask of those who maintain the foregoing position is, to produce a single human being concerning whom it can be said with truth that, independently of *any* leading or information from without, he has become acquainted with the existence and character of God. I am content to peril the whole argument upon the production, or non-production, of such a person. Nay, instead of compelling my opponents to produce a living instance of the correctness of their asseveration, I will acknowledge myself defeated, in the event of their being able to bring forward one properly authenticated narrative of a man who, at any period of the world, was indebted, for his knowledge of the divine existence and attributes, *solely* and *exclusively* to the excogitations of his own mind. It will not do to attempt to put me off with the ideas of God which have been entertained, or the systems of natural religion which have been compiled, by persons professing to be deists, and by deistical characters, who have resided in Christian countries, and have enjoyed the benefits of positive revelation. Is the man,—the aim of whose labours it is, to supersede the authority of the scriptures, by means

of the information with which he has been furnished by that blessed book,—to expect to obtain credit from me, or from any one capable of reflection, when he pretends to have made his mighty discoveries in religion, by dint of the unaided energies of his own understanding? Can I have forgotten, or am I to be supposed unable to apply, Esop's fable of the daw strutting about in borrowed plumage?—No more will it answer the purpose of my antagonist to refer me, for a proof of the triumphs of natural religion, to the low, corrupt, and debasing ideas of *God*, of *morals*, and of *a future state*, which in different ages of the world have prevailed in heathen countries. For, before I can accept of this as satisfying the terms of my challenge, it must be established, that the notions of religion which are found to exist among heathens, have not been the result of information *traditionally* conveyed to them; or of the stores of knowledge, with which the sages of such countries as Greece and Rome, from time to time, returned fraught from the regions of the east, and especially from the land of Judea. Nay, it will be requisite, likewise, to account for the almost universal prevalence of such very peculiar notions as that of *a future incarnation of the Deity*, and of such very peculiar institutions as that of *sacrifice*, without needing to have recourse to *positive revelation* as their origin. Now, is there any person who will undertake to establish *the negative* in these cases,—a point, be it observed, the establishment of which is so indispensable in this controversy, that while all the notions of religion, which

have ever existed in the world, can be easily and satisfactorily accounted for on the principles of *tradition* or *positive information*, it is in vain to expect us to admit the possibility of their ever having *sprung up spontaneously in the human mind*. And if none can be found able or willing to set aside *tradition* as the source of *Pagan religion*, then why adduce and insist on Paganism, as a proof of what is commonly called *natural religion*?* But perhaps all that the supporters of the theory against which I am contending mean, is merely that, if the minds of the human race had been left to themselves without religious guidance or instructions of any kind, there is *a possibility* that they might have stumbled on the doctrines of *the existence and attributes of God*. Those, however, who take up this ground, being understood to admit, that no instance of a person having actually attained to the knowledge of God, by dint of his own unaided faculties,—without any guidance, assistance, or instruction whatever,—can be produced; are they not struck at the absurdity of pretending to oppose *a bare, unsupported, unauthenticated hypothesis* of their own, to *an uncontradicted series of facts*, commencing with the farthest back period to which the annals of the human race reach, and extending to the present day? Nay, if in spite of all this, our opponents will still maintain, that mankind are capable of excogitating the first prin-

* Those who feel any desire to become farther acquainted with the manner in which the notions of religion, entertained by the Heathens, may be traced to divine revelation as their source, are recommended to peruse Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacræ*.

ciples of religion, independently of positive information altogether,—is it not a legitimate *a priori* inference from this, that they must be capable of advancing in the career of divine discovery, independently of positive information likewise? and yet, if both the principle and the inference be correct, how happens it, that in tracing downwards the history of every Pagan nation, we find their views of religion, so far from improving, uniformly and obviously deteriorating? If the tendency of the human mind in reality lay towards religion,—if there were a proneness in man, independently of positive revelation, to investigate and find out the traces of Deity in the works of nature,—as the advocates of natural religion constantly assert; how happens it that, even where there are *a priori* appearances of positive revelation having been to a certain degree enjoyed, the human mind has actually exhibited a tendency to lose, or at least to debase and corrupt it? Can any man, duly considering these things, hesitate to maintain with Mr. Barclay, that all the ideas concerning God, which exist or ever have existed in the world, are, as *a matter of fact*, traceable to information communicated to the mind; and to discard, consequently, as *a groundless hypothesis*, the assertion of the mind being able to know any thing concerning God, by its own unaided resources, and independently of information communicated from without.

What is commonly called *natural religion* stands opposed likewise to scripture. This it is both *directly*, and *by way of consequence*. It is so *directly*. All

human systems of natural religion agree in this, that the existence, and certain attributes of God, may be discovered by the human mind, apart from, and independently of the information furnished by the scriptures. The scriptures themselves assert the contrary. They admit, it is true, the existence of *natural religion;* but their *natural religion,* does not stand distinguished from that which is *revealed,* as it does in the systems of men, but from that which is *supernatural* or *connected with salvation.* There is, according to the scriptures, a religion which is suitable or agreeable to *the natural views and tendencies of the human mind;* and there is, on the contrary, a religion which is opposed to, or rather, properly speaking, rises above *these natural views and tendencies,* and implies *a special change and illumination, on the part of him who is possessed of it.* Neither of these kinds of religion, however, is represented, by the sacred volume, as having its origin in *the mind itself.* Not merely is *faith,* or that *supernatural principle* by which *the children of God* are distinguished from a *world which lieth in wickedness,* represented as *the gift of God,* or the result of *special divine interposition,*—but even that *religion* which for distinction's sake we may call *natural,* is declared to have *divine revelation for its source.* When God first created man and placed him in the garden of Eden, He did not leave him to find out by his own unaided efforts the existence and attributes of his Creator and Benefactor, but made Himself known to him in a way which was accommodated to his natural state and faculties.

A *natural*, as contradistinguished from a *supernatural* manifestation of Himself by God to man, is thus proved to have been coeval with creation itself,—the very circumstance of the minute recording of this fact being intended, as it were, to give a death blow to the idea of man having ever been able, *of himself*, to spell out the existence and attributes of the Supreme Being. And as *in the first*, so *in every subsequent age of the world*, do we find the natural and erroneous notions concerning God, entertained by men who *had not faith*, traced by the scriptures to *information communicated to them, but not understood by them.* If farther scriptural authority were requisite, to disabuse *natural religionists* of their absurd notions respecting man's ability, *of himself*, to discover *the divine existence and nature*, it would be found in the fact, that views which they are accustomed to ascribe to *man himself*, are by the scriptures traced to *divine revelation.* It is by *faith*, and not, as natural religionists contend, by dint of *our own unassisted investigations*, that we know the existence of God; for *he that cometh to God must* BELIEVE *that he* is. Heb. xi. 6. It is by *faith*, likewise, and not by *our own investigations*, that we discover God in his works; for *through* FAITH *we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Ibid. 3. *Faith*, in these and in all the corresponding passages of the same chapter, evidently signifies *belief in the divine testimony*, as contradistinguished from *all the other means of knowledge or conviction.* Nay, in that remarkable passage in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans,

in which the apostle shews, that the gentile world, in respect of their gross abominations and idolatries, were *without excuse*, he does not say, as has been commonly but erroneously imagined, that *God merely presented the works of nature to their eyes, leaving them to make out his existence and attributes from these, without vouchsafing to them any assistance:* no; the principle laid down by the apostle is, that *God at first expressly pointed out to man His character, as exhibited in the works of nature; and that, by doing so, he rendered these works* THE STANDING MEMORIALS *of his power and godhead;* a function which, *when once their signification has been pointed out,* they are admirably fitted to discharge. *That which may be known of God, is manifest in* or *to them,* FOR HE HATH SHEWED IT UNTO THEM.* —But what is commonly called *natural religion,* that is, *a religion which has not its origin in positive revelation,*

* The circumstance of Robert Barclay, of Urie, not having understood the principle above stated, will be found to account for the blunder into which he has fallen, in his 5th and 6th propositions, *concerning universal and saving light.* That none of the adult portion of the human race, raised, however slightly, above a state of idiocy, have ever been without *some notions of right and wrong,*—these notions having had their origin in revelation either *directly* or *indirectly* communicated to them,—cannot be denied. But it is a dreadful mistake, and shews a sad ignorance of scripture, to represent the information, in which such notions have originated, as *saving.* So far from this, the utmost length to which, according to Romans iii. 10—19, it can go, is *to charge the conscience with guilt.* It is a view of God as *bestowing everlasting life freely through his Son,* and *that only,* —a matter always and necessarily imparted through the word,—which saves. Rom. iii. 20, *et sequen.*—Had Mr. R. Barclay reflected a little more, he might have seen that, even on his own principles, his *universal light* neither is nor can be *universal,*—*infants* and *idiots,* a large portion of the family of man, *necessarily wanting it.* Is not his system, then, obnoxious to the same objection which he considers fatal to that of Arminius?

is opposed to the scriptures *by way of consequence*, likewise. What can afford to the mind a stronger proof of the value and importance of *the volume of inspiration*, than to perceive, that the information which it contains *is derivable exclusively from it?* The moment it is supposed that the existence and certain attributes of God may be discovered independently of *positive revelation*, will any man of candour and common sense venture to say, that the value of the scriptures, *as a positive revelation*, is not materially detracted from and diminished? For, on this supposition, is it not plain, that the use of the scriptures, in so far as they treat of the existence and natural attributes of God, or, of that concerning God which we naturally become acquainted with, is not *to communicate information*, but *merely to repeat to us what we already know?* In telling us that He exists, and that He is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and so on, God, on the above supposition, *is adding nothing to the stores of information of which we are already possessed!* How complimentary this to the wisdom of the Supreme Being! But this is not all. *Natural religion*, as it is commonly called, *sets the scriptures entirely aside,—supersedes their authority altogether.* This it does, by proceeding on the principle of not *a single passage* or *a few passages*, but *of every part of the sacred volume being entirely useless.* The capacity of the human mind *of itself* to take *the initiative* in religion being once admitted, the question immediately suggests itself, is there any thing in the nature of the subject to compel it to stop *there?* If the existence of

God,—if a single attribute of His,—be discoverable independently of a positive revelation, what is there to hinder our discovery of all the other attributes of God in the same way? And if, *prima facie*, no impediment to our doing so can be pointed out, of what use or advantage, then, are the scriptures? Is there any occasion for supposing God to have made *an express revelation* of that, which, upon this principle, the human mind is fully competent to discover *by its own unassisted efforts?* Nay, farther, is there not a manifest absurdity in one, who contends for what is commonly called *natural religion*, speaking of the scriptures as *a divine revelation*, when, upon his own principles, we actually *may be in possession of the truths revealed* previous to *the revelation being imparted?* This being the case, can we wonder at *natural religion* having always been a prodigious favourite with men of a deistical character and spirit? It being the necessary effect of admitting the existence of *natural religion*, to set aside *revealed religion* as superfluous, can we wonder at such men as Tindal and his sceptical associates seizing upon *natural religion* with avidity, as the most efficient lever by which to accomplish their purposes? "Concede to us," say they, "that God *may be known independently of a direct and positive revelation from himself*, and *the necessity of a direct and positive revelation being thus superseded*, you may just as well give *the actual existence of such a revelation* to the winds." But if the use of *natural notions of God*, as a position from which to assail with advantage *express*

velation, was thus so obvious to deists,—and if they ewed that it was so by their immediately taking possion of it,—what can be conceived to be a stronger ason than this for the professed advocates of *revela-n*, abandoning ground at once so advantageous to emies and so perilous to friends? Nay, how great e folly or treachery of the latter, when, instead of doing , they actually take up this very ground, and make mmon cause with the avowed infidel, by admitting the ssibility of God being known by men independently *positive revelation*,—thereby doing all that in them s to sap and undermine the only foundation of true ligion? When one thinks of the amazing learning d splendid talents, displayed by many of the *pseudo-vocates of Christianity* who have been chargeable th this conduct, what a striking comment does it ord on the apostle's words, *the world by wisdom knew t God*. O that, in time to come, men calling themlves Christian teachers would shun the rock upon nich their predecessors have split; and that, instead of asting of *natural* and *revealed religion* as allies corally co-operating in the same cause, they would learn view them as deadly enemies, the claims of the one of nich can only be maintained, at the expense of the ter annihilation of the other.

But Mr. Barclay has not contented himself with inting out the fallacy of, what is commonly denomi-ted, *natural religion*. He has contrived to shed adtional light upon the subject, by tracing the notions nich have so long prevailed respecting it to their

source. Two things, he has shewn, have contributed to produce these.

1. The early period of life at which the first ideas of religion are commonly imparted to and acquired by the mind. There is nothing, for which we are more indebted to Mr. Locke, than the ability and success with which he has combatted and overthrown the long-established doctrine of *innate ideas*. How clearly and convincingly has that eminent philosopher shewn, that this doctrine, like many others, came to obtain a footing among mankind, simply from want of reflection on their part. It is true that we are unable to point out, or account for the particular origin of a very large proportion of our ideas. Well, but does it follow from this that such ideas are *innate*, or that *we bring them into the world along with us?* Is not the explanation of the matter simply this, that we begin to acquire ideas almost from the first moments of infancy; and that although the ideas thus acquired may remain, we are unable in after life, in a great majority of cases, to recollect the sources from which they were derived? Our powers of memory when children were of course feeble,—our faculties of observation and reflection had then scarcely begun to develope themselves,—and hence it is that although, at an after period of life, we are conscious of possessing certain ideas, it is impossible for us to say with certainty whence or how we acquired them. Had this plain solution of the difficulties connected with the subject occurred to the philosophers of former times, instead of falling into the mistake of supposing any of

our ideas to be *innate*, how readily would they have perceived, that the reason of our inability to point out the origin of many of our ideas, is neither more nor less than this, that *we have forgotten it.** Strange to tell, although this explanation of Mr. Locke's is now admitted by all reflecting men to be correct, when employed to account for the origin of our ideas in general, the propriety of applying it to the origin of all our ideas of religion, has hitherto been observed by few and admitted by still fewer. And yet, the explanation is just as applicable in the one case as in the other. I grant that mankind every where, and especially in countries where Christianity in one shape or another is professed, are found from their earliest years possessed of certain notions respecting the existence and attributes of God; and that, if asked, they would in many cases find it extremely difficult if not impossible to say, at what time, and by what means, such ideas first obtained an entrance into their minds. But does it follow from this, that such ideas are *innate?* Is it a legitimate inference from our inability to assign the exact period when we became acquainted with the subject, that we brought our knowledge of it into the world along with us; or that, independently altogether of information from without, it obtruded itself upon our notice, so that we could not, by the very constitution of our nature, help thinking of it? O no; the plain matter of fact is that, from our earliest years, nurses, parents, and associates, having been in the constant

* Locke on the *Human Understanding*, Book 1. chap. 3. sections 22—26.

habit of presenting the subject to our minds, we, consequently, have been obliged more or less to think about it; but from the feebleness of our memory and powers of reflection at an early period of life, we are unable to recollect the time when we first heard of it. How easy,—how satisfactory this explanation of the origin of the various theories of *natural religion*. Human beings hear of God and divine things, at a period of life long anterior to that at which reflection begins to assert her supremacy; and because, in advancing years, they are unable to tell the exact period when, or the exact way in which, they became possessed of their first ideas respecting such topics, nothing, forsooth, will satisfy them, but that such ideas must have been *innate;* or, at all events, that they must have been indebted for them to the native and unaided exertion of their own faculties! How similar this to the conduct of the antient Heathens, who, when unable to account for the origin of the inhabitants of any country, were accustomed at once to cut the Gordian knot, by supposing them to have been αυτοχθονες, *aborigines*, or *sprung from the soil on which they lived!* Ignorant, alas! and incapable of reflection, are not merely mankind in general, but the great majority of those who have undertaken to be their instructors. Were the latter reflecting persons, could they help perceiving, that it is because God rendered *an express revelation* of himself coeval with man's creation,—and because he has taken care that, however much obscured and perverted, this *express revelation* should never be entirely lost among the most debased

and degraded of Adam's descendants,—that ideas respecting religion are found, in one shape or another, to prevail among the whole family of man? And, because such ideas, when once introduced, are, like ideas respecting other topics, apt to be communicated to children at an early period of life, could they, if reflecting persons, have failed to perceive in this fact one source of *theories respecting innate ideas of religion*,—as we perceive in the fact of the early acquisition of our other ideas, one source of *the general theory of innate ideas* so successfully attacked by Mr. Locke.*

2. Another cause of the common mistake into which mankind have fallen respecting *natural religion*, is the fact, that God does make use of *the natural ideas* of mankind, as the channel of conveying to them such as are *spiritual and divine*.—Is not this, exclaims the advocate of natural religion, catching at my words, to concede all that we ask for? What other claims, in behalf of natural religion, have we ever ventured to set up, besides those which you now admit to belong to it? —Stop, my friend. Not so very fast, if you please. Can you be so inattentive, as not to have remarked a most material difference between your views, and my

* Should any of my readers be desirous to see the effects which have been produced on the views and reasonings of a very shrewd mind, by not observing, or at least by not understanding, the fact insisted on in this paragraph, he may consult that part of Sandeman's fourth letter on *Hervey's dialogues*, in which the former treats of *reason*. A subsequent perusal of Barclay's "Without faith, without God," especially pages 69—76, edit. 1776, will probably fill him with astonishment, at the ease with which error can be put down by weapons taken from "the armoury of God."

admissions. You hold, that along with every human being there are brought into the world certain natural notions or ideas of God, the existence of which revelation presupposes,—to which revelation addresses itself, —and by its agreement with which the origin and truth of revelation are perceived;—or, if not, at least you hold, that the mind of man, by dint of the exercise of its own natural faculties, and independently of positive revelation altogether, is capable of acquiring such notices, notions, or ideas. Whereas I deny, not merely that the mind of man naturally has such notions, but that it is capable of acquiring them, independently of the information which the scriptures as a divine revelation afford. —Then if you maintain that *natural notions* constitute the channel of God's revealing himself to us, and yet deny the existence of *natural notions of God*, says my puzzled and mortified antagonist, pray what is your meaning? for I confess that I find myself unable to understand you.—And must I suppose your dullness to be indeed so great, that you cannot apprehend the difference between your sentiments and mine? Cannot you perceive a distinction, between *our naturally, or independently of positive revelation, having notions of natural things;* and *our naturally, or independently of positive revelation, having notions of God?* Is there any thing self-contradictory in a person *admitting the former*, and yet *denying the latter?* Now, this is exactly what I do. Human beings, I perceive, are so constituted and situated, that, from their earliest years, they are continually acquiring ideas, through the medium of their

senses, and in consequence of the intercourse which they have with one another. But, independently of revelation, all the ideas which thus obtain an entrance into their minds, are merely ideas concerning natural things; that is, concerning the persons, affairs, and circumstances of this present world. They are ideas of *natural things, naturally acquired.* Let it now be supposed that it is God's intention to reveal Himself, and immediately the question occurs, how, under such circumstances, is this to be accomplished? A moment's reflection may satisfy us, that, as mankind *naturally* have ideas only *concerning natural things,* and as they can only acquire ideas concerning *what they do not know,* through the medium of *what they do know,* God had but one way of revealing Himself to them; and that was, by making use of their *natural ideas,* as the means of suggesting to them such as were *spiritual and divine.* Not their *natural ideas of Himself,* as has been absurdly supposed, but their *natural ideas of natural things.* For instance, mankind *naturally,* that is, *independently of positive revelation,* understand the relations of king and subject, husband and wife, parent and child, and so on. If, then, God is to reveal himself to men, one of the means of doing so must be, to employ the relations which they thus *naturally understand,* for the purpose of manifesting or making known to them what *naturally they are ignorant of,* viz., the various relations in which He stands to them, and they to Him. He finds them, previously to and independently of positive revelation, only understanding, and only capable of understanding,

natural subjects; and from the very nature and necessity of the case, therefore, He avails himself of *these,* as the only medium through which He can elevate them to the understanding of such as are *spiritual and divine.* As soon as this is perceived, one of the grand sources of men's blundering, in regard to *natural religion,* becomes strikingly apparent. They have observed, that God employs *the natural notions of human beings,* as the means of *imparting to them a revelation of Himself;* but they have neither observed nor understood, what *the natural notions which he thus employs* are. They have supposed, that these *natural notions* are *natural notions of God,* instead of perceiving, that they are, in reality, merely *natural notions of natural things.* They have thus confounded *notions of natural things,* which mankind unquestionably are capable of acquiring without positive revelation,—with *notions of God,* which, without such a revelation, no man ever yet acquired or ever can acquire. It is true, that the great majority of the human race to whose ears the truths contained in scripture are conveyed, adopt notions concerning them which are merely *natural;* and this, *because they do not understand them:* but even these *natural notions of God,* with which the great bulk of mankind content themselves, are as decidedly the result of a positive revelation *heard of* by them, as those *supernatural notions of God,* which are the privilege of very few, are the result of the same positive revelation, not merely *heard of,* but also *understood.* Whenever then, in time to come, any boast to us that, independently of

positive revelation, mankind possess certain notices, notions, or ideas of God,—and tell us that but for these God never could have granted a revelation of Himself to them,—let such persons be informed that, constituted as we are, it is undoubtedly true, God could not have revealed Himself to us except through the medium of *our natural ideas:* but that, it is not through the medium of *natural ideas of Himself,* this *revelation of Himself takes place;* (by the bye, an arrant bull; *natural ideas of God,* if such existed, rendering *a subsequent revelation of Him impossible;* the thing *to be revealed,* in that case, *being revealed already*); his mode of procedure in reality being, to render men's *natural ideas concerning natural things,* the channel of opening up to them *views of a supernatural description.*

On these and similar principles it is, that Mr. Barclay discards what is commonly called *natural religion;* and ascribes all the notions of God and of His attributes, whether *correct* or *incorrect* whether *natural* or *supernatural,* which have ever existed, to positive revelation as their source. Not that, according to him or to the writer of these pages, all the notions in question have been taken *directly* from the word of God; for it is acknowledged, that many of them have come and do come to mankind *indirectly* or *traditionally:* but the proposition maintained is, that to positive revelation, as either the *direct* or the *indirect* source of religion, all the notions of it which ever have obtained, or ever will obtain in the world, fall ultimately to be traced; and that, but for such positive revelation, no ideas of the existence of

a Being superior to themselves, could have entered into the minds of mankind at all.

The following bold, lively, and characteristic passage, extracted from Barclay's *Without faith, without God,** will, I am persuaded, convey to my readers, a clearer and more correct impression of what may be denominated that excellent man's fundamental principle, than they are likely to have derived from all the preceding statements and illustrations. After having proposed the following question:

"Are the works of creation, preservation, and providence, ruling, governing, disposing, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying, glorifying, condemning, punishing, judging, and executing of judgment, with the decrees and purposes concerning all those things that come to pass, both as to the matter and manner of them, the works, decrees, and purposes of that One only living and true God, who hath manifested himself in his own incommunicable Being and Character in his word? and is it only by the word we understand these things to be so, and no otherwise?"

He thus answers it:

"Yes. For it is written, 'He that cometh to God must *believe* that he is,' even what he hath declared

* To this masterly work itself, composed in a style the most pointed, interesting, and original,—in the abruptness of its transitions reminding one occasionally of the manner of Sterne,—all must be referred, who have any wish to see the folly of systems of *natural religion* thoroughly exposed, and *revelation*, in a way the most convincing, shewn to be the only *possible* source of *the knowledge of God*. The section in which he demolishes Dr. Samuel Clarke's celebrated *Demonstration, upon natural principles, of the Divine Being and Attributes*, is a rich treat.

himself to be, and nothing else; 'and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him.' Now, it is remarkable, that the expression here used, is not barely *know*, but *believe* that he is; intimating, that our knowledge of God must be of that kind, which comes, not by reasoning upon what we see, nor intuition, as they call it, or looking at a visible object, and so immediately perceiving it; but of that kind only which comes purely by believing the testimony of God: which testimony is the only mean in the Spirit's hand of conveying the knowledge of God into our minds. So that if there were *no word* of God, there could be no *believing* of God: since believing cometh by hearing the word of God. And again, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.' If then you take away the word of God, you take away my faith, you take away my God.——Ah! where is the glory hoped for? The faith, the evidence of it, is gone —the substance (to me) is no more. I know, I can know nothing about the matter. Who can perceive colours without light?

"Put yourself in my place, and I will ask you—let your conscience give a true answer—no shuffling, no evasion, no referring to other people—speak out, the case is home to your heart and spirit, it concerns you there—When did you see the world called by sovereign power out of nothing into being? And light springing out of darkness at the Almighty word, *Light be thou?* and light there was; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

When did you see the formation of Adam's body? God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and man becoming a living soul? Did you see the commandment given; the covenant broken; the death denounced; the glory departing; the nakedness discovered; the man fleeing; the Lord calling, reproving, comforting, and promising the seed of the woman?

"Where wast thou when the law was given, fulfilled, magnified in the death of the Law-giver himself, made of a woman, made under the law, made a curse, to redeem them that were under the curse; that they might receive the blessing, even the adoption of sons, from the hands of God their Lord, who for them died, was buried, arose, ascended, and was glorified at the Father's right hand, from whence he poured down the Holy Ghost, to declare the only true God and eternal life; that many may be saved through the knowledge of that truth, and blessed in the kingdom of their Father, for ever and ever; while all the rest of mankind, who know not God, and obey not the gospel, taking no pleasure in the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness, are condemned already, and shall have the vengeance due executed upon them by the Lord himself, when he shall come, who is the only Redeemer, Saviour, and Judge, who shall say to them on his left hand, who knew him not, and consequently heard not his word, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.'

"When, how, or where, did you see or find out all these things, whether past, present, or to come? They are not seen, they cannot be seen, but by their own proper light and evidence, even the faith of God's record concerning his own proper works. Deny the evidence, and you deny the deeds; acknowledge the evidence, and you acknowledge the deeds: these two, the evidences and the deeds evidenced, stand or fall together.

"So that, save by faith, we have no evidence of God whom we never saw; nor of the connection of any works whatever with him; which connection also, as of effects flowing from a certain adequate cause, we never saw, nor was it possible we could, except we had seen (which was impossible) *that cause* in the very act of producing *those effects*, and the manner how they were produced—Nay, though we had actually been present, (and if we had, how could we have accounted for our own existence)? and seen with our own eyes, the heavens and the earth, with all their hosts rising into being, and continuing before us in their being, and order, and manner, to this very day, we might indeed have been amazed, and perhaps might have conjectured (though even that seems very doubtful too) that possibly there were something or other at the bottom, unseen by us, producing those things; but what that same unseen and supposed thing were, if it really existed, or supposing it did exist, what were the character and manner of its nature, we never could have discovered by our most narrow inspection into the seen things.

"Our conceptions could have gone no farther than our common perceptions and observations of the creature which we saw, if we had even been left without the instruction by the ear, or revelation communicated from another who knew the matter: for, except we had been told, how could a seen, created, finite, various, changeable thing, such as this present world is in our eye, (not to speak at present of the unaccountable embarrassments arising from sin and death), have suggested to our corrupt, blind, sensual, devilish minds, as the minds of all merely natural men are, the idea or notion of an unseen, uncreated, infinite, one, unchangeable, eternal God?

"As the strength of their argument seems to lie in this Samson's lock, let us try it by an instance to our purpose, thus; a greater, or a more amazing scene in itself, was never exhibited by divine power upon the stage of time, not even at the creation of the worlds, than the miraculous works, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, considered in all the visible foregoing, concurring, and following circumstances thereof; yet it was not by what they saw with their eyes, but *only by the faith or believing of his own word, concerning himself and all those things*, that either the disciples, or any other people, came to understand that he was the very Messiah, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world."* Pages 38—42. Edin. 1776.

* After going over this interesting passage, which contains the true answer to the subtile reasonings of Hume, in his Essay on *a particular providence and a future state*, let the reader turn to the miserable attempt to combat Hume's

In this way, then, is it proved, that *all our knowledge of God* is, by the very necessity of the case, *the knowledge of Him as a testifier,* or *the principle of faith:* and this, because all our knowledge of Him, necessarily enters into the mind, *through the medium of His word,*

sophistry which Beattie has made, in his popular but flimsy treatise on *the nature and immutability of truth.* Part 1, chap. 3, sect. 5. The gist of Hume's argument is contained in the following sentence. "It is only when two species of objects are found to be constantly conjoined, that we can infer the one from the other; *and were an effect presented which was entirely singular, and could not be comprehended under any known species,* I DO NOT SEE THAT WE COULD FORM ANY CONJECTURE OR INFERENCE AT ALL CONCERNING ITS CAUSE." This, with its context which I do not wish to overload my pages by quoting, is Hume's poser for the advocates of *natural religion.* Beattie, by maintaining our ability to conclude from *the effect* to *the cause,* in cases where we have not been taught to do so, and where, by the terms of the supposition, we have nothing analogous to guide us, has rendered questionable his candour, or understanding, or both; at all events, he has shewn, that he was no match for his acute and profoundly metaphysical antagonist. Barclay, on the other hand, by admitting, in his usual manly, frank, and unsophisticated style, what was true in Humes's premises, viz., our inability to discover, nay, even to suspect, independently of direct positive teaching, that the phenomena of nature are *effects* of *a cause* superior to themselves, and this, because there is nothing analogous to guide us to such a discovery,—and yet, by shewing that we do know these phenomena to be *effects* of *such a cause,*—has contrived to turn Hume's artillery against himself, and to convert one of his much vaunted arguments against revelation, into the strongest of all conceivable arguments for its existence and truth. "You say," as if Barclay had thus addressed Hume and his supporters, "that we could never, by dint of our own reasonings merely, have attained to the discovery of the works of nature having proceeded from an unseen cause: you making use of this, for the purpose of insinuating, that no such cause exists. Now, your assumption is cheerfully granted. It is perfectly true, that *from the works of nature only,* no man, ever yet, has been able to reason up to the existence of A GREAT FIRST CAUSE. But your assumption makes against yourselves: for it so happens that we have discovered—that we do know—these works of nature to have proceeded from SUCH A CAUSE. This deists profess to admit; and, whether in your opinion true or not, that information to this effect has been communicated to mankind, even you yourselves cannot deny. As, then, on your own shewing, we could not

or *of what He has been pleased to testify, or make known, concerning Himself.* Setting out from this point, then,—that all the notions of God which ever have existed, or ever will exist in the world, are the result of *positive revelation* reaching *the ears,* and, when correct, also *the understandings* of men, Mat. xiii. 23,—the rest of Mr. Barclay's system, in so far as *the assurance of faith* is concerned, is beautifully consistent both with the sacred volume and with itself. Agreeably to this system, we now proceed to shew, that as *all knowledge of God,* is necessarily *knowledge of Him as a testifier,* or *what is commonly denominated faith;* so *all such faith* necessarily respects, and enters the mind through the medium of discovering, *our own personal interest in the truths concerning God which we believe.* But the fact of *His bestowing eternal life unconditionally upon the children of men,* is the great subject matter of *God's*

have made this discovery *of ourselves,* or *by dint of our own reasonings;* and yet, as the fact is, that *we actually have made the discovery; quære,* to what can this discovery of ours be traced, except *to information derived by us from a source superior to human reasonings,* or *to what is commonly called divine revelation?*" And now, Christian reader, which of these two ways of meeting the sceptical reasonings of Hume, is the better one. To maintain with Beattie, Campbell, of Aberdeen, *et hoc genus omne,* that the human mind is capable, by its own native and unaided energies, of rising from *the works of nature,* to *God as their cause,* thereby both undermining *the necessity of revelation,* and affording Hume, and men like him, an opportunity of sneering at the idea of men's pretending to discover *by reasoning,* what, if known to all, must become known *as a matter of fact:* or, to allow with Barclay, that the human mind, by its own native and unaided energies, never could from *the works of nature* have concluded *the existence of God,*—thus causing *the necessity of an express revelation, in order to the possession by any of the human race of a knowledge of God,* to harmonize with, and constitute one of the most glorious evidences for, *the actual existence of such a revelation.*

testimony concerning Himself, or the grand medium *through which He manifests His character.* To shew, then, how it is, that we can only believe God's testimony concerning the fact of *His bestowing eternal life unconditionally on the children of men,* or believe in *His own revealed character,* by believing Him *to bestow eternal life unconditionally upon ourselves,*—that is, to bring out and illustrate Mr. Barclay's theory respecting *the assurance of faith,*—is what I am now called to. In order to facilitate the reader's comprehension of the subject, I shall throw, what I have to observe with regard to it, into the form of three propositions.

FIRST PROPOSITION.

The books denominated the Holy Scriptures can only be received as *a divine revelation,* on the ground of *their own authority;* or in the light of *those remarkable internal evidences of their origin which they possess, and which, when understood, they exhibit.* In other words, *the only proofs* that they are divine *must proceed from themselves.*

Loudly has the cry of man's proneness to scepticism been echoed, and deeply has his infidelity been deplored, by the religionists of every age and clime. Now I am far from intending to deny, that scepticism and infidelity are leading features of the human character. On the contrary, I am satisfied, that they are principles deeply rooted in and essential to the natural mind. See Gen. iii. 1—6. But strange as the allegation at first sight may appear, I have no hesitation in maintaining,

that none have contributed more towards confirming these principles, and erecting infidelity into a system, than those very persons, who are the most clamorous in their vituperations of it. This they have done, by stating the evidences of divine revelation in general, and of the Christian revelation in particular, in such a way, as both to evince their own scepticism, and to engender, or at least to foster and encourage, a sceptical spirit, in all who have been unfortunate enough to come within the sphere of their influence. This heavy charge is, I am sorry to say, but too susceptible of proof.

According to such persons, the scriptures may be proved to be *a divine revelation*, or *the word of God*, by what they are pleased to call *external evidences*. These *external evidences* are, as the phraseology implies, *something not contained in, and therefore capable of being distinguished from, the scriptures themselves*. But there is no occasion to have recourse to the etemology of the phrase, for an explanation of what is meant by it, for when we come to examine these *external evidences*, we find them to consist chiefly of *human testimonies*, or of remarks, admissions, and reasonings, supposed to be favourable to divine revelation, which have been gathered from the works of human historians and controversialists.* When, however, it is conceived to be possible to

* Miracles and prophecies have, by some writers on this subject, been classed among *the external evidences of Divine Revelation*. What stuff! As if, forsooth, independently of a divine revelation having actually existed, and of its having made us acquainted with miracles and prophecies by furnishing us with specimens of them, such things as miracles and prophecies could ever have been heard or even dreamed of. Why, miracles and prophecies, so far from being

prove *the truth* and *divine origin* of the scriptures *by such evidences,* what is this but to conceive the possibility of a testimony which, by the terms of the supposition, is *divine,* being proved by a testimony or series of testimonies which, by the terms of the same supposition, is *human?* a notion, the absurdity of which is not immediately perceived by all, only on account of the numbers who in every age have countenanced it. To the exposure of this notion, bottomed on ignorance, supported by fraud, and terminating in systematic infidelity, I now direct my efforts.

That a testimony which is *divine,* can receive no real proof or support from a testimony or testimonies merely *human;* and that the notion of a divine testimony requiring, or even admitting such a proof, is one of the strongest corroborations of the natural infidelity of the human mind; I at once and without any qualification assert in the most positive terms: and this for the following among other reasons.

1st. Because it is at variance with one of the first principles of dialectics, viz., that *the greater* can never be proved by *the lesser,*—that what is *more clear,* can never be proved by what is *less clear.* If there be such a thing as *a divine testimony,* it must, from its very nature, be *the strongest of all evidence.* But what is

external evidences of revelation, are a portion of *the revelation itself;* and, consequently, rank among the most valuable and important of its *internal,* I should rather say, *only evidences.* They constitute a very large and glorious portion of those rays of divine light which, shining in the record itself, radiate from it into the hearts of those who believe, manifesting to them its divine nature and origin. See 2 Corinth. iv. 6.

itself the strongest of all evidence is not susceptible of proof. It may with propriety be employed to prove or corroborate other testimony; but proved or corroborated by other testimony, superior as it is to all such testimony, it is impossible that it can be. *God cannot receive testimony from man.* John v. 34. He, then, who attempts or pretends to prove *a testimony* which he admits to be *divine*, by *testimony* which is confessedly *human*, if not stupid himself, must calculate not a little upon the stupidity of those to whom he addresses his pretended demonstrations.

2ndly. Because it is to contradict the account which the scriptures give of themselves. There is no attribute which the scriptures more frequently assert, as peculiarly belonging to themselves, than that of light. They are described as *a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.* Psalm cxix. 105. The effect of *the entrance of God's words* into the mind, it is expressly asserted, is *to give light.* And in a passage which, from its beauty and sublimity, must be familiar to every biblical student, it is averred, that the unfolding of the meaning of the scriptures to the mind, is productive of results exactly analogous to those which attended the creation of natural light. *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined, in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Corinth. iv. 6. Nay, that, respecting the sense in which the word light is employed in scripture, there might be no dispute, God, by the instrumentality of one of the inspired writers,

has condescended to furnish us with a definition of it. *Whatsoever*, says the apostle Paul, *doth make manifest is light.* Ephes. v. 13. The scriptures thus declaring with regard to themselves that they are light,—and the same scriptures declaring it to be essential to light that it shall be capable of making manifest,—what can we think, I do not say of the spiritual, but even of the natural understandings of those, who represent the scriptures, not *as manifesting their own divine nature and origin*,—which if light they must do,—but *as having their divine nature and origin manifested by something foreign to themselves! If the scriptures be light*, which every man who admits their truth and divine origin must allow that they are, and yet *if they cannot themselves make manifest what they are*, then must *light* have completely altered its nature; and instead of being itself *a source of manifestation*, it must be *capable of receiving*, nay, it must *require to receive manifestation from some other source or quarter!* Why, is there a single human being so blind as not to perceive, that if it were possible for the truth and divine origin of the scriptures to be proved *by evidence not contained in themselves, that evidence*, and *not the scriptures themselves*, would be entitled to the appellation of light? Have we not heard the inspired apostle himself declaring, that *what makes manifest*, and not *what is manifested*, is light? How astonishing the folly of numbers of the human race, and those, too, *the wise and prudent* of their day. It is their recorded opinion, that the scriptures may be proved to be the word of God, by something which is

necessarily of inferior authority to themselves, that is, that *light* may be manifested by —— *darkness!* for so, according to these very scriptures, is human nature, and are all the reasonings which proceed from it represented to be. John i. 5. 1 John i. 5, 6. ii. 8, &c. &c. Would to God that men could but be induced to reflect.

3dly. Because if the testimony of God could be proved by the testimony of man, it would follow, that there was possessed by man *naturally* a knowledge of God, superior to that which could be conveyed to him *supernaturally* by a divine testimony. Upon the obvious principle, already more than once insisted on, that *the superior* proves *the inferior*, and not *the inferior the superior*, if God could have appealed to *the testimony of man* in proof of *His own testimony*, it is clear, that there must have been possessed by man already a knowledge of Himself, superior to that which by *His testimony* He was conveying. In other words, if *the testimony of God* could have been proved by the *testimony of man*, not only must we have admitted the existence of what is commonly called *natural religion*, but likewise that *natural religion* affords clearer and more distinct ideas of God than *revealed religion* does! But, laying out of view, for the present, the absurdity of supposing, under such circumstances, *a divine revelation* (strange abuse of terms) to be necessary or even possible, have we not just shewn, that *any natural knowledge of God*, that is, that *any knowledge of God previous to the knowledge of Him imparted either directly or indirectly by positive revelation*, does not and cannot exist. That the idea of

such a knowledge of Him existing is a mere figment of the human mind. And if so, what can be more obvious, than that, as there neither is nor can be any knowledge of God *naturally* existing in man, to which in revealing himself the Supreme Being may appeal, all knowledge communicated respecting Himself must be, in the strictest sense of the terms, *a revelation;* and that, as such, it must carry home conviction to the mind *by its own proper force, light, and evidence?* God, it is true, from the very necessity of the case, makes use of *the natural notions* of the mind respecting *natural things,* as the vehicle for conveying to it *notions of things that are spiritual and divine;* and in so far as he *thus* makes use of them, may be said to appeal to them in proof of the instruction which he intends to convey. But observe that, under the supposed circumstances, the appeal is made to these *natural notions of natural things,* not *as such,* but *as combined in a way, presented in a light,* and *speaking a language,* which man of himself had not and could not have discovered; but which, when manifested to man, carries home irresistible conviction to his mind. It is not that *natural notions of natural things,* of themselves, either lead to, or constitute *a divine revelation;* but it is that *natural notions of natural things,* when arranged in a particular way by infinite wisdom, and presented in that way to the mind by Almighty power, are found to be of the nature of *self-evidence,* or to speak a language, which, although new unquestionably, is from the stupendous grandeur, the harmonious self-consistency, and the animating nature of the views

which it exhibits, the moment that it is understood, productive of *absolute certainty as to its truth and superior origin.* Like the axioms of mathematics, *the comprehending of the terms of divine revelation,* is *the perception of its nature, truth, and origin.* Mat. xiii. 11, 16, 23. This is the way in which the scriptures come to be received by us as divine. There is no idea of God, nay, there is no idea of a Being superior to himself, in the mind of man *naturally;* but, in the scriptures, the ideas which the human mind *naturally* has, have been arranged in such a way—have been brought out under such a guise and fashion—and have been carried out to such a degree of perfection—as to become the means of suggesting to us the only idea of a Being *superior* to ourselves, and of a state of things *superior* to the present, which, while in this world, we are capable of acquiring. Thus it is, that, what we naturally *do know,* God makes the means of raising us to what we naturally *do not know.* Still, however, this is exactly the reverse of allowing that the scriptures are proved to be divine, by *external evidences* or *human testimony.* All the evidences of divinity which the scriptures have are *internal:* in other words, it is from the manner in which they are constructed, it is from the nature of the information which they convey, it is from the effects which when understood they are found to produce in our minds, that we know them to proceed from a Being superior to ourselves,—from an authority superior to our own. Although, therefore, the supremely wise Jehovah has used *human testimony,* among other *natural things,* as one of

the materials out of which to construct *a revelation of Himself;* it is not for the purpose of His revelation being corroborated by that testimony *speaking merely the language which it naturally does,*—in which case unquestionably *God would receive testimony from man* or *the superior* would be proved by *the inferior,*—but it is to make human testimony *speak a language which naturally it does not;* human testimony thereby becoming merely *one of the means of conveying the divine testimony to man,* and, as it acquires thereby the nature of *self-evidence,* being merely a specimen of *the inferior* proved by *the superior.* That is, *the purpose* for which human testimony has been employed in the sacred volume and in the transmission of it to us, being understood in the light of the information itself which it is one of the means of imparting to the mind, *the truth* likewise of such human testimony becomes apparent in the same way. How few appear to understand that profane history, and human testimony of other kinds, can never, by any possibility, prove the truth and divine origin of the scriptures; but that, on the contrary, the scriptures having first proved themselves to our minds to be true and divine, in the light of the information which they themselves convey, are found afterwards to throw light upon and confirm profane history; indeed, in so far as profane history agrees with them, to impart to it a certainty, which, but for this circumstance, it never could have possessed.*

After perusing these arguments in opposition to the

* See Appendix C.

practice of attempting to prove *the testimony of God*, by *external evidences* as merely *the testimony of man*, will any reflecting person venture to assert, that the practice in question has no tendency *to foster*, if not *to beget*, a spirit of scepticism? What, in the ordinary affairs of human life, has a greater tendency to bring discredit on even a good cause, than attempts to support it by weak, insufficient, and inconclusive reasonings? Is not the almost necessary consequence of our detecting the hollowness, and worthlessness of the latter, to create in our minds a suspicion also of the hollowness and worthlessness of the former? This, no man, who is acquainted with human nature and has watched the operations of his own mind, can deny. But if so, have we any right to expect that Christianity itself, based although it be on the strongest of all foundations *the revelation and accredited testimony of the Most High*, shall, if presented to the minds of men under a wrong aspect, and divested of its only proper and satisfactory evidences, form any exception to the general rule? Have we any right to expect, that if we pretend to prove *the word of God*, by *the word of man*, we shall excite no suspicion respecting the goodness of a cause, which requires to be, or even admits of being, thus supported? Now my complaint is, that this erroneous view of *the evidences of Christianity*, is what writers on the subject are continually affording. They pretend to admit that Christianity has a divine origin, and that the records which supply us with information concerning it are divine likewise; and yet, strange to tell, they

attempt to prove both the religion and the records in which it is contained *to be divine*, by testimony *which is confessedly human*. Contrary to the very first principles of logic, they attempt to prove *the greater* by *the lesser!* Stupid and presumptuous men! Will you never learn wisdom? Are you not aware, that the legitimate and necessary tendency of the line of argument which you thus see meet to pursue, is, in so far as in you lies, to betray the citadel of truth into the hands of its deadly and inveterate foes? By the stress which you lay on what are called *the external evidences of Christianity*, you beget in the minds of your hearers a conviction of such evidences being *necessary to* and constituting *the foundation of Christianity*;—and yet, as reflecting men cannot help soon perceiving, that *such evidences*, as *merely human*, must be of inferior authority to *a testimony which is really divine*, can they help concluding, that it is impossible for *the latter*, in any respect whatever, to rest on *the former* as its basis? And having once detected the use of absurd and inconclusive reasoning on your part, can they help in future cherishing suspicions both of you and your cause? Surely we have no reason to wonder at the fact of the majority of thinking men being *sceptical*, when we consider the pains which the pretended advocates of Christianity have taken to render them so. Blessed be God, that He has not entrusted the keeping of the stronghold of truth to such hands; for dire experience shews us that, had He done so, such pretended *watchmen* would but have *watched in vain*.

Nor is the scepticism of human beings, springing from preposterous attempts to prove *the testimony of God* by *the testimony of man*, a mere matter of inference or conjecture. It is a melancholy fact. Such attempts, besides furnishing infidel writers with the most plausible of all the arguments by which they have justified their own rejection of Christianity, have armed them, likewise, with the most powerful of all the weapons by which they have assailed it. Let any thinking person read carefully the following home thrust of Rousseau, and then ask himself how, admitting *natural religion* and *the possibility of Revelation being proved by human testimony*, he would set about answering it. "To know more concerning religion, than can be known from an inspection of the universe, and the proper use of my faculties, I must have recourse to methods of an extraordinary kind. Among these methods I cannot reckon *the authority of men;* for as no man belongs to a different species of intelligent beings from myself, whatever any man knows naturally, I myself may know also; and as other men are as liable to be deceived as I am, the credit which I attach to what another man says must arise, not from his choosing to make assertions, but from his being able to prove what he asserts. The testimony of man, then, is at bottom only the testimony of my reason itself, and adds nothing to the natural means of acquiring a knowledge of truth which God has been pleased to vouchsafe to me. Apostle of Truth, what information can you give me, of which I am not to be the judge?—God himself has spoken; listen to

His revelation.—Ah! that is a different story. God has spoken! A big word, truly. And to whom, pray, has He spoken?—He has spoken to men.—Why, then, have I heard nothing of what He has said?—Because He has entrusted to other men a commission to report His sayings to you.—I understand you: *it is to men I am indebted for their telling me, what God has previously told them. I would have preferred hearing God himself speak;* TO HAVE SPOKEN TO ME, WOULD HAVE REQUIRED NO GREATER EXERTION OF POWER ON HIS PART, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE MEANS OF PRESERVING ME FROM ANY RISK OF DELUSION OR MISTAKE.—He has insured you from any such risk, by satisfactorily attesting the mission of His ambassadors. —How so?—By miracles.—And where are these miracles?—Recorded in certain books.—And by whom were these books composed?—By men.—And by whom were those miracles witnessed?—By men who have borne testimony to their truth.—*What! always human testimony! Always men telling me, what other men have told them!* HOW MANY MEN, THUS INTERPOSED BETWEEN GOD AND ME."* I now ask, again,

* Toute la théologie que je puis acquerir de moimême par l'inspection de l'univers et par le bon usage de mes facultés, se borne à ce que je vous ai ci-devant expliqué. Pour en savoir davantage, il faut recourir à des moyens extraordinaires. Ces moyens ne sauroient être l'autorité des hommes; car, nul homme n'etant d'une autre espece que moi, tout ce qu'un homme connoît naturellement je puis aussi le connoître, et un autre homme peut se tromper aussi bien que moi: quand je crois ce qu'il dit, ce n'est pas parcequ'il le dit, mais parcequ'il le prouve. Le témoignage des hommes n'est donc au fond que celui de ma raison même, et n'ajoute rien aux moyens naturels que Dieu m'a donnés de connoître la vérité. Apôtre de la vérité, qu'avez-vous donc à me dire dont je

how will the advocates for *external evidences* or *human testimony*, being able to prove *a divine revelation*, get over this? Will it suffice for them, in the teeth of this powerful appeal to common sense, to continue asserting, that *the testimony of man* may prove *the testimony of God?* Stupid that they are! Cannot they perceive the truth of Rousseau's axiom, that *human testimony is incapable of rising above itself;* and that, therefore, it is the very acmé of absurdity, to represent that *as proved by the testimony of a Being superior to man*, which, with the same breath, they allow *to be proved by the testimony of man?* And, if able to perceive this, can they help perceiving likewise, that the infallible consequence of persevering in the practice of reasoning from *human* to *divine testimony* is, either to represent *the inferior testimony* as proving *the superior;* or by confounding *the inferior testimony* with *the superior*, virtually *to deny the existence of the superior testimony altogether?* And not only so, but if in the scriptures *we have merely men testifying to us concerning God*, or if we receive the scriptures as true

ne reste pas le juge? Dieu lui-même a parlé; ecoutez sa révélation. C'est autre chose. Dieu a parlé! violà certes un grand mot. Et à qui a-t-il parlé? Il a parlé aux hommes. Pourquoi donc n'en ai-je rien entendu? Il a chargé d'autres hommes de vous rendre sa parole. J'entends: cé sont des hommes qui vont me dire ce que Dieu a dit. J'aimerois mieux avoir entendu Dieu lui-même; il me lui en auroit pas coûté davantage, et j'aurois été à l'abri de la séduction. Il vous en garantit en manifestant la mission de ses envoyés. Comment cela? Par des prodiges? Et où sont ces prodiges? Dans des livres. Et qui a fait ces livres? Des hommes. Et qui a vu ces prodiges? Des hommes qui les attestent. Quoi! toujours des témoignages humains! toujours des hommes qui me rapportent ce que d'autres hommes ont rapporté! Que d'hommes entre Dieu et moi!

and divine *merely on the ground of men testifying and trying to prove to us that they and their contents are so*, is it not clear, that as, on either supposition, we have *man* not *God* speaking to us, Rousseau is but too well justified in his sneering remark, about preferring in a case like this to hear God rather than man addressing him? It is true, as Rousseau has suggested, that for God to speak to man *directly*, can cost Him no greater exertion of power, than for Him to speak to man *indirectly*; and it is also true, that it is only by God speaking *directly* to our consciences, that we are or can be preserved from any risk of delusion or mistake. And, blessed be His name, it is in this very way that he does address Himself to *the household of faith*.* We who believe the truth are not ashamed to confess, that He has spoken *directly* to our consciences. In the scriptures understood by us, we have heard God himself addressing us;—we have had the light of His glory, in the face of Christ, penetrating into the inmost and darkest recesses of our hearts;—and we have thus experienced what it is to have God by his word dwelling in us, and we thereby dwelling in him. To those who are *ashamed of the cross of Christ*, and who shew that they are so by attempting to prove by *human reasonings* what can never enter the mind except on the ground of *divine testimony*, we leave to exhibit, by their manner of procedure, the otherwise latent but decided scepticism of their minds. By God's own testimony having entered our minds through faith,

* Ponder on the oft-repeated language of scripture, He *that hath ears to hear*, *let* HIM hear.

we know that we are of God; and the circumstance of God himself having spoken to us, being thus to us a matter not of *reasoning* but of *fact*, we fling scepticism to the winds.

But the advantage given to the infidel tribe, by the ordinary mode of stating *the evidences of Christianity*, has not been spied out by Rousseau alone. A more subtle and formidable antagonist than Jean Jacques, remains to be encountered by religionists in the person of Mr. Hume. In his celebrated *Essay on Miracles*, the latter has propounded and pushed an argument which it is absolutely impossible, except on the principles of Mr. Barclay, to turn aside. If any of my readers, untaught by the failure of Dr. Campbell, Principal of Aberdeen University, Dr. Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury,* and other writers in opposition to Hume, still think that the arch-sceptic's argument may be fitly answered on *their* principles, such persons are welcome to make the attempt.—The Essay of Hume consists of two parts. In the first, he shews, that the evidence of our senses, or our own personal experience, is that upon which ultimately all our convictions of matters of fact rest; that our belief in testimony is a secondary principle, resolvable into our personal experience; that the

* Let me not be misunderstood. No man can respect more highly the talents of the eminent writers alluded to, than I do; nay, no man can be more satisfied than I am, of their having made the most of their cause, and written works which to *the Christian* may be eminently useful. But what I say, is, that they have not touched Hume's argument; and that upon the principles adopted by them, it was impossible for them to do so. I would recommend to the attentive perusal of all thinking persons, the letter of Hume to Campbell, to be found in the preface to the second and subsequent editions of Campbell's work *on Miracles*.

evidence of our senses, however trustworthy on the whole, is not infallible; that the evidence of testimony, as being founded on the evidence of our senses, cannot be more infallible than it; and that, therefore, if we are to ascribe to the evidence of testimony, the greatest power of producing conviction of which it is susceptible, we cannot ascribe to it more of that quality, because we cannot ascribe to it a greater share of infallibility, than belongs to the evidence of the senses. The second part of the Essay is destined to shew, that, in ascribing to the evidence of testimony, the power of producing a conviction equal to that produced by the evidence of our senses, we actually ascribe to it too much; that a number of circumstances, enumerated by the author, fall to be taken into account, by some or by all of which, the force of the evidence of testimony is necessarily detracted from; and from the whole the conclusion is drawn, that, on a foundation thus *necessarily fallible*, it must be impossible to rest *the faith of miracles:* a miracle, according to him, being a violation of the laws of nature; and yet, another violation of these laws,—viz, the existence of an infallible testimony, *which the testimony of man is not*,—requiring to take place, before miraculous interposition can be believed in.—Such is Hume's celebrated argument, which, without detracting from its force, may, perhaps, be thus expressed. "Experience is the foundation upon which all our convictions of matters of fact ultimately rest; and whatever, therefore, contradicts our experience, must also shock our belief. But experience teaches us, that neither the in-

formation conveyed to us by our senses, nor still less that for which we are indebted to testimony, is infallible. The same experience is at variance with the possibility of *miraculous interposition;* that is, of any infringement on or violation of the laws of nature. This being the case," argues the ingenious sceptic, "how can we, on the basis of *testimony,* which experience, our only safe guide in such matters, has shewn *to be fallible,* rest our belief of *miraculous interposition,* a belief, in the very essence of which there must be involved a conviction, that *our experience itself is fallible.* In other words, we having a natural tendency to credit our experience,—a tendency which advancing years, so far from diminishing, strengthens rather and increases,—how can we believe in *miracles,* or in *what is contradictory to that experience,* without being conscious in ourselves of the greatest of all miracles, *the renouncing of that very principle upon which our belief in testimony is founded.*" And now, what have those who contend for *human testimony* and *human reasonings* being able to prove *the word of God,* to say in answer to this? The argument cannot be got rid of by denying, that *from experience our belief in testimony is derived,* when the fact is, as every reflecting man knows and every candid man will acknowledge, that *the very same experience* which is the ground of the general confidence reposed by us in *the information conveyed to us by our senses,* is also the ground of the general confidence reposed by us in *the evidence of testimony.* Nor, allowing as we must do, that *experience* lies at the bottom of *our belief in testimony,* will any or will all of the following

answers to Hume's argument, however valid they may be in themselves and however satisfactory to the Christian, be sufficient to introduce into the mind of a single sceptic *a positive conviction of the truth of revelation.* First, it will not satisfy such an one to allege, what is perfectly true, that *experience* is a term of ambiguous import, comprehending under it, not merely what at *the present moment* is known and has been observed by nations and individuals, but likewise all that *at any past* or *future period* has been or shall be known and observed by them; and that, therefore, what may contradict or rather may be inconsistent with *the present measure* of our experience, may nevertheless be perfectly consistent with *a more enlarged measure* of it: for, the answer is ready, in Mr. Hume's argument *the present* and not the *past* or *future knowledge* of nations and individuals, is clearly the meaning attached to the word. Secondly, no more is the scepticism of Hume and his followers done away with by alleging, what likewise is very true and very important to the child of God, that miracles are so far agreeable even to *present experience,* that the beings which were the subjects of them and the circumstances under which they were wrought, were almost exclusively persons, things, and circumstances, which fall under our every-day observation; God merely through the medium of a peculiar combination of things *previously known,* elevating our minds to the conception of things *previously unknown:* for, again, the follower of Hume retorts; true, I acknowledge that a large proportion of the scriptures is constructed of materials, and

treats of circumstances, with which by experience I am acquainted; but still I cannot, as you do, find that these *known things* raise my mind to the conception and conviction of *things previously unknown.* Nay, even although we should, in the third and last place, have recourse to what may be called our palmary argument and observe, that *experience* absolutely requires *a miraculous testimony* to be believed in with *a miraculous faith;* and should offer to prove this by shewing, that, according to experience, *ordinary human testimony,* does not require *a faith of an extraordinary kind* to credit it, —and that *an extraordinary testimony* cannot, Mr. Hume himself being judge, be credited by *an ordinary faith,*—and should draw the conclusion, that thus, according to experience itself, *an extraordinary testimony* must be believed in by *an extraordinary faith;* adding that it would be *miraculous,* that is, as Mr. Hume understands the word, *absurd* and *incredible,* were it otherwise: yet even here, again, we encounter our acute and indefatigable antagonist, who will not fail to suggest to us, that, however cogent this reasoning of ours may be, it is merely an attempt to establish our case *negatively,* or by shewing him that, under certain supposed circumstances, *a miraculous belief* would not be contradictory to or a violation of *their present experience;* the fact of *such circumstances* and of *such a belief* actually existing, still, however, remaining to his mind *unproved.* In short, let us do what we will—let us hem in, shut up, nay even confute the sceptic, by reasonings founded on and deduced from admissions of his own,—all our *reasonings*

are met and neutralized by *the fact*, that in his own mind he is unconscious of having experienced that conviction which we as Christians are possessed of.*

I am well aware that Mr. Hume, in some of the statements contained in this very *Essay on Miracles*, is far from being invulnerable. In the following remarkable passage, for instance, this prince of metaphysicians, by dropping the character of *the sceptic* and assuming that of *the dogmatist*, has laid himself open to the animadversions of even the least acute and practised of his antagonists. "Though the Being to whom the miracles is ascribed, be in this case Almighty, it does not upon that account become a whit more probable; *since* IT IS IMPOSSIBLE *for us to know the attributes or actions of such a Being*, OTHERWISE THAN FROM THE EXPERIENCE WHICH WE HAVE OF HIS PRODUCTIONS IN THE USUAL COURSE OF NATURE." Why, this assumption by Mr. Hume of *the impossibility in question*, is as barefaced a specimen of the *petitio principii* as was ever hazarded: at all events, it is as bad as any which he could ever charge against the weakest of the advocates of Christianity. Indeed, the whole of his boasted argument is grounded on this very fallacy. He has assumed the non-existence of *a divine testimony*, and, consequently, the impossibility of any one having had

* I attach no importance to the argument in opposition to Hume, so elegantly and so ingeniously insisted on by the late Dr. Brown, of Edinburgh, in one of the notes subjoined to his *Essay on cause and effect*. The Dr. having assumed the existence of the Deity *as a new physical cause* warranting the expectation of *new physical effects*, his argument, however valuable to those who admit *the cause*, is of course utterly pointless and useless in all discussions with the sceptic.

the experience of believing it. But who sees not, that this was to *assume*, what required *to be proved?* It is cheerfully granted, that he himself had not experienced *the belief of a divine testimony:* but it was to be guilty of a breach of one of the most obvious and generally received rules of philosophizing, to make *the mere negative experience* of himself and some others, the foundation of *a universal affirmative conclusion.* His own example of the Eastern monarch who, on the footing of his *negative experience*, denied the possibility of water freezing, might have suggested to him the folly as well as danger of this method of reasoning. A single person able to declare, and actually declaring that he had *experienced* what it was *to believe the testimony of God*, Mr. Hume could not help being aware, was amply sufficient, in the eyes of correct thinkers, to disturb his assumption, with whatever shew of reasoning it might be invested. For, what are all *the reasonings* in the world, when set in opposition to *a matter of fact?* But, while I perceive the weakness of Hume and of those who espouse his sentiments, when quitting the ground of *scepticism*, on which alone their *negative experience* permits them to stand, they venture to assume that of *absolute certainty*, and allow themselves *positively to assert an impossibility, which they cannot prove*,—I am constrained to admit, that Hume and his followers are strong when they deny, that *mere human testimony*, as *necessarily fallible*, can by any possibility become the ground of our believing *a divine*, that is, *an infallible testimony*.

Thus do we discover, that the idea so preposterously adopted and acted on by men who would fain pass for Christians, of its being possible to prove *divine testimony* by *human reasonings*, constitutes the very strength of the infidel cause. Sceptics have defied professing Christians to convince them of the truth and divine origin of the scriptures, *by reasonings founded on principles which they themselves admit.* The challenge has been accepted,—the attempt has been made,—and a signal failure has been the result. What, under such circumstances could have been anticipated, but, as has actually happened, the confirmation of sceptics in their disregard of, contempt for, and opposition to the inspired record? But wherein have the advocates of revelation acted amiss? In accepting the challenge of these Philistines *who have openly defied the armies of the living God?* No. God forbid, I should say, that any man thus zealous for the cause of religion, is deserving of censure. Professing Christians have acted aright in meeting their foes in the field of controversy,—they have acted aright in tearing to pieces the various specimens of sophistry, and special pleading, and falsehood, and delusion, by which infidels have attempted to justify their opposition to the Messiah,—they have acted aright in manfully *confuting* sceptics upon their own principles. Had the friends of religion stopped here,—had they aimed at no more than the *confutation* of their antagonists,—all would have been well. Sceptics, by the nature of their attacks upon Christianity, had furnished its supporters with abundant materials for refuting them upon

their own principles; and admirably has this been accomplished by numbers who have buckled on their armour, and proceeded to the field, in this holy cause. But the grand error of the great majority of the professed advocates of Christianity has been, that, in consequence of their not having been really Christians themselves,* they have not been able to comprehend the difference between *answering and refuting sceptics* on the one hand, and *satisfying them of the truth of Christianity* on the other. The former may be, nay has been most triumphantly accomplished, by many who have come forward as writers on the Christian side, in the infidel controversy: the latter, no man ever has accomplished, or ever will accomplish. By *human reasonings* we may combat and even silence the sceptic: but by *human reasonings* we can never introduce *divine truth* into his mind. It is by not confining their efforts to *the refutation* of their adversaries, and by allowing themselves to indulge in the hope of being able by human reasonings *to accomplish their conversion*, that writers on *the evidences* have exposed themselves and their cause to ridicule; and that, instead of changing the sentiments of infidels, they have unwittingly been instrumental in confirming them in their scepticism. At this particular point the superiority of the system of Mr. Barclay, over those which are commonly adopted, stands out to view.

* Their own conviction of the truth of Christianity, such as it is, has been founded merely on *external evidences* and *human reasonings*, or, has been merely *one modification of scepticism*; and, therefore, to introduce into the minds of others a conviction *similar to their own*, is the utmost that they have aimed at.

Mr. Barclay knew well that sceptics may, *upon their own principles* and *by reasonings the cogency of which they themselves if candid will admit*, be driven from every position which from time to time they take up; nay, he knew that, in various learned and able works, the chief sophisms and fallacies, behind which they are in the habit of entrenching themselves, had been stormed and destroyed: but he knew well, also, that it was utterly impossible, *upon their own principles* and by *human reasonings*, to satisfy sceptics *positively* of the truth of *divine revelation*. To open the eyes of the understanding, so as that human beings shall perceive the truth of God's word, he knew was a task to which no man was competent, God having reserved the power of doing so to Himself, as His own exclusive and distinguishing prerogative: and, therefore, for any person calling himself a Christian to pretend, by *reasonings* which a natural or sceptical man *can understand and admit*, to be able to introduce into that man's mind *the knowledge of divine truth*, was, he perceived, for such a person absurdly to arrogate to *the word of man*, a power which the scriptures ascribe and confine to *the word of God*. Nay, for any person calling himself a Christian, to pretend to communicate to men's minds *divine truth* by means of *his own reasonings*, was, he perceived, for such a person virtually to deny to the scriptures *the very character* which in so many words we ascribe to them, every time that we denominate them *a revelation*. Thoroughly acquainted with the distinction in question, Mr. Barclay has framed all his writings accordingly: and, therefore,

while he never omits any suitable opportunity, by reasonings the correctness of which every well informed man must admit, *to confute the sceptic* and *silence the gainsayer*, he never undertakes, by reasonings of any kind, *to impart the knowledge of divine truth*. He was too much of a philosopher, as well as of a Christian, not to be aware, that in religion as in other matters the minds of men are enlightened and enlarged, not *by deductions from facts already known*,—which would be the case were religion capable of being learned *by human reasonings*,—but *by new facts made known to them*. He was enabled by divine teaching to apply the Baconian philosophy to scripture, and to shew, that what *external nature* is to *the natural philosopher, the scriptures* are to *the enquiring Christian;* the scriptures, when observed and understood, supplying the latter with stores of *spiritual*, as the phenomena of nature, when observed and understood, supply the former with stores of *natural facts*. *Spiritual facts* presented to the mind by God through the medium of the scriptures create, as he perceived, *a spiritual experience; this experience* being itself of the nature of *a fact*, which those only who are conscious of possessing it can comprehend. A divine testimony he thus saw and taught is, from its very nature, capable of being understood only *in its own light*, or *through the medium of the facts with which it makes us acquainted:* in one word, *a divine testimony* is necessarily *a revelation*.

I have been thus explicit in my statement of the present subject, with a view, if possible, to render my

proof of the sceptical tendency of the ordinary mode of exhibiting *the evidences of Christianity*, subservient to the information of the enquiring and reflecting reader. Infidelity, it must be evident to every Christian, is strong only, when assailed in a position, which the scriptures themselves, as well as common sense, sanction it in assuming. From this, in vain would we attempt dislodging it by *mere human testimony*, for, like Leviathan, *it laugheth at the shaking of this spear*. But powerful in its resistence to *carnal weapons*, infidelity is powerless *in every other respect*. The sceptic would fain, if he dared, act the part of the dogmatist: but *positive* and *unqualified assertion* is a species of warfare, in which, even his own experience may teach him, he is not fitted to prosper. *Absolute certainty* belongs not to a cause like his. It may be suitable enough in the mouth of *an infallible Being*, and in the mouths of *those who credit the testimony of such a Being*: but issuing from the lips of a man the very essence of whose creed is *a negation of all certainty*, it can give rise to no other feelings but those of ridicule. The sceptic may, fairly enough, state *his own want of confidence in a divine revelation* as a matter of fact; and may insinuate his suspicions, founded on this fact, that *none of the human race possess confidence in such a revelation*: but *absolute certainty* that he is *right in cherishing sceptical sentiments*, and *absolute certainty* that all are at bottom *sceptical like himself*, is what, *as a sceptic*, it is impossible for him to attain to. To their *scepticism*, a state of mind which is far from being blameless, John iii. 18,

ix. 41, 1 John v. 10, Mr. Barclay leaves the infidel tribe. Aware that *the enlightening of the mind* is a prerogative reserved to Himself by the Supreme Being, John i. 13, vi. 44, 45, James i. 17, 18, Revel. iii. 7, he attempts no interference with it. He proposes his own *absolute certainty* of the existence and truth of *divine revelation*, not as any *direct* and *positive proof* to sceptics, but merely as a gentle hint to them of their rashness and folly, when, quitting their citadel of *doubt*, they presume to speak of *impossibilities*. To a far more important task he betakes himself, that of reproving the scepticism of men who, under the guise of a Christian profession, have, by their sermons and other compositions, contributed materially towards the advancement of the infidel cause. In contradistinction to their cold, feeble, and hesitating way of stating their opinions, as if Christianity were, like other religious systems, a matter of mere speculation, Mr. Barclay boldly proclaims, that through the medium of *the divine testimony introduced into his mind by faith*, the truth, not merely of *miracles*, but of *the writings of which they constitute a part*, has become to him a matter of *absolute certainty*. His language to all sceptics, whether systematically so or otherwise, is to the following effect.—"We neither can rest, nor do we pretend to rest *the testimony of God*, upon *the testimony* or *reasonings of man*. We know and acknowledge that *the testimony of man cannot rise above itself;* we know and acknowledge that *the inferior cannot prove the superior*. We hold it, therefore, as our fundamental principle, that in

every case in which *the testimony of God stands true to the conscience*, it is in consequence of its *having been seen in its own light*, or *having been proved by itself*; and that whatever, independently of the divine testimony, may be accomplished *negatively* in the way of *refutation*, there is no way of convincing any man *positively* of the truth and divine origin of the scriptures, except that of their divine author, *through their own medium*, shining in and manifesting himself to the mind. What falsely pretends to be *a divine revelation*, may, we are well aware, be tried, convicted, and condemned, in the light and by the instrumentality of *that which really is so*: but this very prerogative of being the tribunal by which *all spurious revelations* are to be tried, which, from its very nature, we find ourselves obliged to ascribe to *a divine revelation*, necessarily exempts *this revelation* from being itself amenable to the jurisdiction of any tribunal. *Quis judicem judicabit?* God may, through the medium of His word, summon His creatures to His tribunal: but what tribunal of His creatures shall have the effrontery to summon Him to its bar? *He may try*, but who will say, that *He may be tried?* Be it known, therefore, unto all of you, whether open enemies or pretended friends, particularly to such of you as have hitherto been attempting to prove *the testimony of the Creator*, by *the testimony of His creatures*, that we perceive a light and an evidence emanating from the scriptures themselves, which, independently and exclusively of all other considerations, manifest to us their divine origin: and that, instead of regarding *the fallible and often*

inconsistent testimony of men, as any corroboration of *the infallible, perfectly self-consistent,* and *necessarily truthful testimony of God,*—as is done by all who contend for the existence of *external evidences of revelation,*—we having first seen the scriptures to be *a divine revelation,* in the light of their own *peculiar, intrinsic,* and *self-satisfying evidences,* have acquired thereby the means of afterwards throwing light upon the loose, straggling, and often woefully disjointed materials, with which profane history supplies us. Instead of joining with you in supposing that what you call *external evidences* can throw light on Christianity, we make use of Christianity to throw light on *your boasted external evidences.*"

What truth, what manliness, and, at the same time, what keen severity of rebuke, in all this! Here we have *the testimony of God* elevated to its true rank and dignity, and made to be, not *the recipient,* but *the source of light.* And is the man who could thus see so clearly, and express himself so forcibly,—the man whose *zeal for his God* was thus so evidently *according to knowledge,*—to be ridiculed as an enthusiast, or classed among infidels? It is true that many before Mr. Barclay's time,* and especially the compilers of most of the early Protestant Confessions,† had maintained, that *the*

* See Calvin's *Institutes,* Book 1, chapter 7, *throughout.* Also, Francis. Turretin. *Institut. Theol. Elenct.* L. 2. Q. 6. § 11. Dreadfully is the value of Calvin's otherwise excellent remarks, in the chapter referred to, spoiled and detracted from, by his admission of the existence of *a knowledge of God* which is *independent of revelation: the necessity* and consequently *the authority of revelation* being thereby subverted.

† "The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church; but wholly

evidences of the origin of the scriptures, con-
he principal ground upon which we are obliged
ve them as divine: it was reserved, however,
to shew, not merely that *these internal evidences*
ences only to the man by whom they are seen to
s light is *light only to him who has eyes to see*
hat they constitute *the sole evidences* upon which
does or can receive the scriptures as the word

Having perceived, he was the first systemati-
shew, that a new character,—a character supe-
that of man,—behoved to be presented to the
efore any testimony could be received on an
y superior to that of man;—that in the scrip-
is new, this superior character is presented to
d as a witness or testifier, through the medium
stimony itself, and in such inseparable connec-
h it, that to understand and receive the one, is
ily, also, to understand and receive the other;
lastly, that it is impossible for a testimony once
on an authority superior to that of man, after-
ther to require or receive corroboration from the
ıy of man.*

SECOND PROPOSITION.

our belief of the scriptures as *a divine testi-*
is impossible to separate the conviction of our

who is truth itself) the author thereof; *and therefore it is to be re-*
ıse it is the word of God." *Westminster Confession*, chap. 1. sec. 4.
following section.

* See appendix D.

having *a personal interest in the blessings revealed to us by that testimony.*

This proposition has for its basis all those passages of scripture, in which faith is declared to be connected with, and to imply the possession of, spiritual and eternal privileges. Such passages are, *he that believeth* HATH *everlasting life*, John iii. 36, *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ* IS *born of God*, 1 John v. 1, and so on. The connection subsisting between faith, and the possession of spiritual privileges, being thus established, not more plain is it that two and two make four, than that as certainly as we know ourselves *to believe the gospel*, so certainly must we know ourselves *to be possessed of the privileges which stand connected with the belief of the gospel.* If we could believe, and yet be ignorant of the fact of our believing, then of course it would fall to be admitted, that belief of the divine testimony, did not necessarily imply the conviction of our having personally an interest in the divine love. But if it can be shewn, that as certainly as we believe the divine testimony, so certainly must we know ourselves to believe it, how can a man who *believes on the name of the Son of God* call in question the fact of his *having everlasting life*, of his *being born of God*, and so on, without charging with falsehood in regard to one part of his testimony, that Being whom he professes to be crediting in regard to another part of his testimony? And how can God be charged with falsehood in regard to any one declaration which he has made, without having

a charge of falsehood insinuated against him virtually in regard to all? Now, that no man *who believes the divine testimony* can be *ignorant of the fact of his believing it*, must be evident from the two following considerations.

1. From what has been already proved respecting *the infallibility of consciousness.* The consciousness of every mental change or operation, being necessarily connected with that mental change or operation; and consciousness being always a faithful reporter of the internal changes which are continually taking place, indeed, being properly speaking synonymous with these internal changes themselves; what possibility is there of any man believing the divine testimony, without being conscious of believing it? and if conscious of believing it, what possibility is there *of his entertaining doubts* with respect to the fact of his believing it? But,

2, Even supposing that some of my readers may be unable to apprehend the conclusion which follows in this way, they must at least be capable of understanding the following argument. The scriptures, we have shewn, have fitly characterised themselves by the appellation of *light.* We have also shewn, upon the authority of the same scriptures, that *it is essential to light to manifest itself.* Now putting these facts together, let me ask the most stupid and prejudiced among my readers, if it be possible for the divine testimony *as light* to shine into the mind, and yet to leave the mind unconscious of its having so shone into it? It is a matter of fact, that natural light cannot fall upon the natural

eye without making itself visible, provided the eye be in its ordinary and healthful state; and if so, is there a single man who has paid the slightest attention to the operations of his own mind capable of maintaining, that truth, which likewise is light but light of a nature much superior to the other, may be perceived by the eye of the understanding, and yet that the understanding may be all the while unconscious of the fact?—Should any be foolhardy enough to hazard such an assertion, *credat Judæus Apella!*

If it be thus apparent, that to believe the gospel and to know that we believe it, are expressions of synonymous import; and if, with the belief of the gospel, God have seen meet inseparably to connect the possession of eternal life and other important spiritual privileges; how obvious is it, as Mr. Barclay has asserted, that unless we can be holding God to be true *in regard to one part of His testimony*, when we are virtually calling him a liar *in regard to another part of it*, we cannot be *believing the gospel*, and at the same time be *entertaining doubts respecting our own personal inheritance of everlasting life.*

Had Mr. Barclay chosen to stop here, even in that case his main position would have been established. He had shewn that knowing ourselves to believe the divine testimony concerning Jesus, we cannot but know ourselves to have eternal life,—the same faithful and true witness who bears testimony concerning Jesus, testifying likewise concerning the inseparable connection between faith in Jesus and everlasting life,—and this

statement he might have challenged all the sophistry of his antagonists to overturn. But powerful as this argument is, it is, properly speaking, only *ad hominem;* and therefore had he declined advancing farther, he would have stopt short of what actually constitutes the strength of his cause. His position, although in reality impregnable, would nevertheless have been exposed to a variety of plausible objections, which might have been urged in such a way, as to puzzle and perplex the minds of the humble and less reflecting portion of the followers of the Lamb. For instance, it might have been alleged, as indeed it has been, that, as according to the terms of the present proposition, we cannot know ourselves to have eternal life, except through the medium of knowing ourselves to believe, our conviction that *we have eternal life,* is not of the nature of *direct belief in the divine testimony,* but is merely *a conclusion of our own minds, deduced from and resting upon the other conviction, that we ourselves believe.* With a view to obviate this, and every other objection of a similar kind, Mr. Barclay proceeded to state his

THIRD PROPOSITION.

The very same evidence by which we are convinced, that *the scriptures are a divine testimony,* is the evidence by which we are convinced, that *we ourselves personally have everlasting life.*

This proposition I have no hesitation in denominating the glory of Mr. Barclay's system. It is that which

unites together its various parts, and gives to the whole a beauty and a consistency of which it must otherwise have remained destitute. The discovery of it,—from its amazing practical importance in thoroughly satisfying the conscience, and enabling it to disentangle itself from those toils which ignorance and sophistry had in too many cases contrived to throw around it,—sheds a lustre upon Mr. Barclay's name, and elevates him to a rank in the Christian church, which future ages at least will know how to appreciate. Let me correct myself. The discovery of it will attest to future ages, the singular honour conferred by God upon this His devoted servant; for not to man, but to Him who is emphatically styled *the father of lights,* let me never fail to trace up and ascribe *every good and every perfect gift.* In his statement and illustration of the proposition which we are now considering, Mr. Barclay was perfectly original. Divines and private Christians before his time had approached it, and some of them very closely too; but to him was reserved the honour of being the first to understand and develope it to the world. Some before his time had to a certain degree detected the groundlessness of natural religion;—had maintained that the reason for any man's receiving the scriptures as divine, was their own internal evidence;—and had seen the connection subsisting between the belief of the truth, and the conviction of personal interest in that truth:—but he was the first to see clearly, and state convincingly, the view which was indispensable to give consistency to these important truths; and thereby

to stop the mouths of infidels, and infidelish professors of Christianity, for ever. "Thus, verily, before God, by whatever evidence I hold the resurrection of Jesus for a truth, by the same precise evidence must I hold it for a truth that I am justified,"* says this eminent servant of God; and by the ample, scriptural, and satisfactory demonstration of this which he has given, has he, in the estimation of every one truly deserving the Christian name who is acquainted with his writings, placed divine truth upon a footing, and connected it with *the good hope through grace* of individuals in a manner, far superior to any which it had ever occupied or appeared in, in any mere human composition on the subject of religion, since the days of the apostles.

By representing *the evidence of the truth of Christianity*, and *that of our own personal interest in the blessings of Christianity*, as being one and the same, the mind of this *spiritually enlightened man* soared into a region, far beyond that to which the mere *natural capacities* of ordinary religionists could follow him. They tried him by the low, earthly, and grovelling standard of their own notions; and, as might have been anticipated, being unable to reconcile him with it, they necessarily condemned him. 1 Corinth. ii. 14. The Sandemanian tribe, in particular, thought that they had entirely demolished him and his system, by sarcastically inquiring, "in what part of the scripture, the name of John Barclay, or of any other man, was to be found recorded as an heir of everlasting life." A witticism,

* *Assurance of faith vindicated*, page 55, Edit. 1825.

this, first had recourse to by Mr. M'Lean, and regarded by Dr. Wardlaw and men of his stamp as rather too good to be neglected by them, in their subsequent attacks on the Berean doctrine of *the assurance of faith*. This, however, like many other sneers and sarcasms of a similar kind, was seen by Mr. Barclay to be merely one of the methods by which men, who have never had the truth manifested to their consciences in its own light and with its own peculiar and divine evidence, endeavour to justify to themselves their opposition to the profession of that truth by others; and was treated by him accordingly. To have God specifying his people in the sacred record by name and surname, he perceived, suited amazingly *the natural notions of the natural mind*,—was the highest idea of the way in which we can acquire the knowledge of a personal interest in the blessings revealed in the divine testimony, to which *the natural mind* can attain,—and, consequently, there were excited in his mind feelings of the most intense regret, for the case of the individuals who found it necessary to have recourse to such a method of combating truth.

But while Mr. Barclay, clad in the panoply of divine truth, set sarcasm at defiance, he knew that he was not entitled to despise fair and legitimate argument. He knew that his duty as a Christian was, *to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asked him a reason of the hope that was in him*. Not that he was bound to render his reasons satisfactory to the querist, for that he knew was God's prerogative and not his; but that he

d to be able to assign reasons at least consis-
themselves, and satisfactory to his own mind.
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ile in this world, we have or can have of *what*
; and this evidence he must be prepared to
As a rational being he knew, that every *effect*
a *cause;* and that the only adequate cause
h *a conviction of testimony being superior to*

that of man can proceed, is *evidence proving the superiority of the testimony.*

2. He was bound to be able to assign a reason to the Sandemanian tribe, for *his believing that he himself had a personal interest in the blessings revealed by the divine testimony.* And this reason he perceived, must, as in the former case, be something contained in the record or testimony itself. It could not be *an appropriating act of faith,* or indeed any actions whatever performed by him; for to represent the one or the other as the ground of his personal hope of salvation, would be to represent that hope as resting, not on the divine testimony itself, but on that which was necessarily inferior to it. Still less could his reason for cherishing the personal hope of everlasting life be, the good opinion entertained by others respecting him. In this way, then, rejecting all acts and exercises of the mind, as in any point of view whatever contributing to the production or corroboration of personal confidence towards God, Mr. Barclay was prepared to assign as his reason for cherishing personal confidence, the language and sentiments of the inspired record itself.

It became thus a settled point in the mind of Mr. Barclay, as it must be in the mind of every man by whom the subject has been fully considered and is rightly understood, that both the reason or evidence on account of which we are convinced *that the scriptures are divine,* and that on account of which we are convinced *of our having a personal interest in the blessings which they reveal,* must be something internal or con-

tained in these scriptures themselves. To maintain, that we can either receive the scriptures as divine, or believe that we are interested in their blessings, upon evidence of an external kind, that is, upon evidence distinct from what is contained in the scriptures themselves,—must, on the supposition of the scriptures being divine testimony, be, in both cases and equally, to pretend to rest *the superior* upon the authority of *the inferior*. But what is the reason or evidence by which, as Christians, we are convinced that the scriptures are God's word; and that we ourselves personally are destined to the enjoyment of everlasting felicity?

To this, Mr. Barclay, taught by the scriptures themselves, returns for answer, as the evidence in both cases is *internal*, so is it in both cases *one and the same*. As it is the inspired record which in both cases *furnishes the evidence in question*, so in the views which that record discloses and the truths which it reveals *does that evidence in both cases consist*.

And as the whole of the contents of the inspired record may be summed up in this, *the doctrine of eternal life freely bestowed*; so, in the doctrine of ETERNAL LIFE FREELY BESTOWED, revealed to us in the scriptures, have we the evidence, as well of *the truth and divine origin of these scriptures*, as of *our own future and everlasting happiness*.

So inseparably connected, indeed, is the evidence of *the one* with the evidence *of the other*, that as, on the one hand, I neither have nor can have any real view of the scriptures *as emanating from* an authority superior

to that of man, until I perceive brought out in them the doctrine of *eternal life freely bestowed;* so, on the other, the moment that I perceive *eternal life freely bestowed,* that moment do I perceive it *bestowed on myself.*

To render this plain and palpable even to the meanest and least reflecting capacity, it may be proper to enter a little more minutely into the subject; and to answer at some length these questions: first, how is the doctrine of eternal life freely bestowed, the evidence to us of *the truth and divine origin of the scriptures?* and, secondly, how is this doctrine the evidence to us of *our own personal interest in the blessing?*

First. *How is the doctrine of eternal life freely bestowed, the evidence to us of the truth and divine origin of the scriptures?*

In order to our being convinced that a testimony is divine, that is, that it originates in a quarter and proceeds from an authority superior to that of man, it is requisite, 1st, that we be made acquainted with the character of a witness or testifier superior to man; 2dly, that the character of this witness or testifier be brought out through the medium of the testimony itself; and, 3dly, that the testimony given be consistent both with the character of the testifier and with itself. Without the first of these requisites, we should want the only authority upon which the testimony could be received; without the second, the testimony could not be received on the ground of self evidence; and without the third, the

testimony being unworthy of the testifier would necessarily fall to be rejected.

The doctrine of *eternal life freely bestowed*, made known and insisted on throughout the scriptures, supplies us with all these requisites.

1st. To reveal the fact *of eternal life freely bestowed*, is also to reveal *the existence of a Being by whom it is bestowed*. A blessing bestowed apart from the idea of an intelligent bestower is a manifest absurdity. But a Being capable of bestowing eternal life is superior to man. Human beings can only impart to their offspring, a life short and uncertain like their own: and therefore a Being capable of imparting to others endless existence, must in the light of this very fact be seen by us to be our superior. But, as on becoming acquainted with the existence and character of such a Being, we become acquainted with the existence of a witness or testifier superior to man, is it not plain, that the testimony of such a Being *we may*, nay, as understanding His character, *we must receive*, as possessing an authority superior to that which we are in the habit of ascribing to the testimony of man?

2dly. As it is through the medium of the revealed fact of *eternal life freely bestowed*, that the character of a witness or testifier superior to man is made known, so is it in this very fact that *the essence of the testimony itself consists*. So inseparable are the character of the testifier and the nature of the testimony, that take away the one, and you take away the other,—replace the one, and you replace the other. God's character never has

been known,—never will be known,—except through the medium of, and in connection with, the testimony which he has given respecting Himself. This is indispensable in order to His testimony possessing the nature of self-evidence. The character of a Being superior to man behoved to be made known to us, if any testimony was to be received by us upon an authority superior to that of man. But unless the character of the testifier had been wrapped up in the nature of the testimony itself, whence was the evidence of the truth of the testimony to be derived? If you say from a knowledge of God previously and otherwise acquired,—after observing that such an answer would be merely to remove the difficulty a step farther back, the question still remaining unsettled, how, except through self-evidence, could such a previous knowledge of God, supposing it to exist, have been communicated?—I attack the answer directly by enquiring, how, on the one hand, such a previous knowledge of God, *if inferior*, could have *proved* or *thrown light on* a subsequent manifestation of the divine character, which, by the terms of the supposition, *is superior?* and how, on the other hand, this previous knowledge of God, *if superior*, could have admitted of any other or subsequent manifestation of the divine character at all? How could that which, by the terms of the supposition, was itself *the highest degree of revelation*, afterwards either require or admit of any thing deserving the name of *revelation?* View the matter in whatever light you please, and you will find, that unless God had chosen *to* manifest himself as a testifier, through the medium of

His testimony itself, it was impossible for Him, constituted as human beings are, either to have made Himself known, or to have substantiated the truth of His testimony. A divine testimony, therefore, must, from the nature of things, be *the testifier testifying respecting himself.* So thoroughly must the character of the testifier be *interwoven with the testimony itself,* nay, to express myself if possible still more strongly, so thoroughly must the character of the testifier *constitute the very essence or staple of the testimony,* that it must be impossible for us ever to know more of the testifier than we know of his testimony, or more of the testimony than we know of the testifier. When God bears testimony concerning eternal life as His gift, through the superiority of the testimony to any thing which man naturally could have conceived, He makes known the superiority of His own character as the testifier; just as on the ground of His own character manifested to be superior to that of man, in the fact of His freely bestowing this blessing, He warrants us in the unhesitating reception of His testimony. It is only by the fact of the testimony concerning eternal life freely bestowed, being superior to any with which we are naturally acquainted, that it is the means of making known to us as the testifier, a Being superior to any with whom we are naturally acquainted; and *vice versa.*

3dly. It is in the light of the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed,* apprehended as the sum, substance, and import of the Holy Scriptures, that *these scriptures, being seen to be thoroughly* consistent both with the

character of the Being therein revealed and with themselves, are seen to be a divine testimony. The principle upon which this proceeds is, that *self-consistency is the essential attribute of truth.*

The Korân speaks of a Being who confers eternal life; but the character of the Being therein spoken of is not self-consistent. He is capricious, revengeful, continually contradicting himself, and above all disposed to wink at any enormity, provided it be committed by Mahomet's adherents and followers. Not so the God of the scriptures. If represented as Himself possessed of eternal existence, the blessing which he bestows upon others, all his other attributes are therewith corresponding.—He is almighty. To his power all his creatures are subject; His will all His creatures are continually and in every respect fulfilling. The bestowing of eternal life is an act of his mighty power.—If He is sovereign, He is also just and merciful. He exacts and expects no more from His creatures than He qualifies them to perform; He punishes them always as their iniquities deserve; and He is constantly heaping upon them the richest favours. If He is inflexibly just in exacting *the wages of sin* which *is death*, He is also merciful in bestowing as *His gift, eternal life.*—Moreover He is perfectly wise. No changeableness, no caprice, no self-contradiction, appears in the character of the God of the scriptures. An end or purpose is aimed at by Him; to this end a vast number of means, at first sight of the most complicated and embarrassing description, but, when more closely examined into, wondrously consistent

with each other, are adapted; and the whole plan of procedure thus matured and arranged, is, as from its nature was indispensable, gradually brought out and developed. The free gift of eternal life is the end, to which the whole course of providence and grace, as a series of means, is subservient. The wisdom of the Being revealed in the scriptures is visible in nothing more, than in His having employed human language, every thing connected with this present world, and especially every thing connected with man, as the means of opening up his character and purposes; and thereby of developing and illustrating what otherwise must have been utterly incomprehensible. Could we have conceived of a Being as wise, who should have addressed man in a language which he was unable to comprehend? Surely a set of writings which, in the descriptions which they give of the Supreme Being, represent him as perfect not in one but in all respects, and which thus represent him as possessing a character which is self-consistent, carry on the very face of them one of the most striking internal evidences of their truth.*

* In nothing, perhaps, is the self-consistency of the scriptural character of the Being by whom *eternal life* is bestowed more distinctly seen, than in the fact, that throughout the sacred volume He is represented as bestowing it *freely* or *unconditionally*. When we consider the state and circumstances of the creature, and the relation in which the creature necessarily stands to the Creator, by what possibility could the creature have deserved everlasting life at the hands of the Creator? What claims, previous to his possession of it, had man upon his Maker for even the life that now is? and if man has not been able to retain, but has deserved to forfeit, a paltry existence like this, what claims could he have had upon God for a blessing so unspeakably great as that of everlasting life? If to the free will of the Creator alone we find ourselves compelled to trace up man's

This, however, is not all. Not merely do the scriptures prove themselves to have an origin superior to that of man, by the consistency of the character which they ascribe to Him whose existence and attributes they reveal, but also by their consistency with themselves. In this, as well as in every other respect, the scriptures are perfectly *sui generis*. Whatever may be the subordinate objects or purposes which, in the composition and arrangement of the particular parts of them, have been kept in view,—the moment they are understood, to one grand object every part of them is seen to be subservient. The moment the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed* is revealed to us, that moment are we put in possession of the key which unlocks to us all the treasures of the sacred writings. Considered apart from this fact, the scriptures appear to be an unconnected and

possession of the one, is there any adequate cause besides this to which we can trace up his possession of the other? In *bestowing eternal life freely*, how beautifully does God appear invested with the attributes of a sovereign. Not like a pedlar bartering for his wares, and engaging to set off so much of the heavenly felicity, against so much of the virtue which the creature of his own free will should be able to display; but, like one intimately acquainted with the utter destitution of all self-resources on the part of those who are to be benefitted, and determined to act in all respects as their superior, bestowing upon them what they never could have deserved, and yet what they nevertheless must enjoy, before the perfections of his own character can be thoroughly manifested. Besides when *eternal life* is received by us as *the gift of God*, do we not see *love* which is *the divine nature*, and not any thing in *the nature of man*, to be the origin, the prompting motive of the whole? for, is it not the nature of love, to be unable to rest satisfied except with the heaping of favours upon those who are its objects? Now, is there not something like glorious self-consistency in the character of a Being, who, out of his unexhaustible fullness, freely imparts to his creatures all that they have or can have; and who, in the case of intelligent creatures, renders all his *natural* gifts to them, subservient and preliminary to the *supernatural gift* to them of life everlasting.

inconsistent jumble of words;—they present to us a series of histories, prophecies, and devotional exercises, all of them no doubt remarkable enough, but which, taken as a whole, are destitute of sense, meaning, or object. They are "a mighty maze, without a plan." But when we understand, that the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed* it is their object to reveal; and that from the constitution of the human mind, and the circumstances in which man is placed, it was necessary to reveal this fact gradually and by way of contrast; the whole becomes plain, intelligible, and convincing. The forfeiture of the life that now is, we see to have been an indispensable preliminary to the enjoyment of another life. Adam as the channel of conveying to us this present life, fitly introduces to us Christ as the channel of conveying to us that which is to come. Man's inability to transmit more than *an earthly existence* is set before us, for the purpose of contrasting with it and thereby enabling us to comprehend the ability of God to confer *a heavenly existence.* We discover that the miseries of the life that now is were intended, among other objects, to suggest to us by way of contrast, and thereby to render desirable by us, the glories and happiness of the life which is to come. Sin entered, that there might be an opportunity for the display of grace. The law entered, that, by the abounding of transgression thereby, a means of revealing to us the superabounding of grace might be provided. Man is represented in the scriptures as in all respects sinful and therefore dying, that as contrasted with him and with his character, we might

be prepared and enabled to understand the character of the Son of God, who is in all respects sinless and is therefore possessed of and able to confer eternal life. To the revelation and development, then, of the doctrine of *eternal life freely bestowed*,—in every possible variety of ways, and by methods which, although beautifully adapted for the purpose, it was clearly impossible for the wit of man of itself to have devised,—are the scriptures, when understood, seen from first to last to be subservient. Take from the bible this doctrine, and you reduce it to a heap of unmeaning rubbish; see this doctrine pervading every part of the sacred volume,—see it to be the grand, the fundamental doctrine, which that book has to reveal,—and the whole becomes luminous and self-consistent. Tell me whence any proof of the divinity of the scriptures more convincing, than this self-consistency of all their parts,—than this subserviency of the whole to the revelation of the doctrine of eternal life freely bestowed,—can by any possibility be derived?

Such as have paid attention to the preceding statements and reasonings, will now be able to perceive how it is, that *the resurrection of Christ* is proved or rather proves itself to the mind. When I say *the resurrection of Christ*, I do not mean to speak of that event, to the exclusion of the other particulars of the history of our blessed Lord; but merely to select one part of his miraculous history as a specimen of the whole: the principle upon which any one part of it stands true to the conscience, being that upon which every part of it does so. *The resurrection* of Christ carries to us upon the

very face of it, the strongest internal marks of its truth and divinity. In it we perceive the display of a character in all respects superior to that of man. It exhibits a might superior to his; for, as a mere fact, it could not have been accomplished by human power. Justice and mercy, too, to an extent never before nor since displayed among men, and in such a way as not in the slightest degree to encroach on the provinces of each other, appear manifested in it. Nor is the superiority of the wisdom which it evinces, the least extraordinary circumstance connected with it: for in the circumstance of a Being who was perfectly righteous, and who by possessing our nature was one with us, being raised to everlasting or perfect life, there is presented to us such a source of everlasting life to ourselves, as, the moment it is understood, perfectly satisfies the conscience. In one word, *the resurrection of Christ* is seen by us to be a truth, because, understanding the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed,* we perceive that the resurrection of Christ is the only and the appropriate channel, through which that blessing could, by any possibility, have flowed to us. Besides, not only does *the resurrection of Christ* carry the strongest evidence of its truth and divinity on the very face of it,—not only has it, when viewed abstractly, all the characters of self-evidence,—but as a fact recorded in the sacred volume, and pervading in one shape or another every part of it, it both imparts its own character of self-evidence to that blessed book, as well as receives from it an additional mass of light or evidence in return. It not only

appears mentioned at the end of each of the four gospels, but it was, if I may so express myself, the fitting, the necessary termination of the career of the extraordinary personage, whose life and doings are there recorded. It not only appears mentioned in these gospels, but from the Acts of the Apostles, and their several epistles, it seems to have been the very staple of their preaching, the very ground-work of all their exhortations, warnings, and censures. It not only appears mentioned and alluded to in the New Testament, but it is prophesied of in the Old. Psalm xvi. 8—11. Nay, it not merely appears there directly prophesied of, but beginning with the first promise, or rather going back to the creation itself,—and tracing down the Old Testament through the types, ceremonies, and institutions of the law, and the history of the Children of Israel, to its very close,—it is impossible for the spiritually enlightened and attentive mind, not to perceive in every part of it, continually recurring allusions, some more, some less direct, to that extraordinary event. Indeed, so completely does the fact of *the resurrection of Christ* pervade the whole of the sacred volume, that every narrative,—every declaration,—every promise therein contained, will be found in one way or another to imply and stand connected with it. It is the bruising of the serpents head; it is the antitype of the brazen serpent; it explains to us David's elevation to the thrones of Judah and Israel, after a period of great depression and suffering. Above all, as has been already observed, *the resurrection of Christ* stands in inseparable con-

nection with *eternal life freely bestowed.* It is only in the light of *the former fact,* that we perceive the channel through which there can be conveyed to us *the latter blessing.* It is only in the light of *Christ's resurrection from the dead,* that we perceive the source and the earnest of *our own resurrection from the dead.* As might have been anticipated, then, with regard to a book, which, as *perfectly true,* must be *perfectly self-consistent,* not more certainly is the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed* seen to pervade every part of the sacred volume, than is *the resurrection of Christ from the dead,* as the only channel of its conveyance, seen to pervade every part of it likewise. And now, can a mass of self evidence, demonstrating the truth and divinity of any fact, and the truth and divinity of the book in which that fact is recorded, stronger than that by which Christ's resurrection from the dead, and the writings by which that fact is made known to us are proved to be true and divine, be imagined? How absurd, not to say criminal, the conduct of those, who, while a light brighter than that of the mid-day sun shining forth from the sacred record itself, is demonstrating *to us* the truth of Christ's resurrection from the dead, yet pretend to rest *their* belief of the truth of the fact upon *external evidences!* Shall we wonder at God, as the suitable mark of his displeasure at such conduct, giving up persons of this stamp to their own strong delusions?

The evidence, by means of which the truth of the sacred volume as a whole, and of the various state-

ments which it contains, enters into the mind, where belief in reality exists, is thus perfectly obvious. Why do I believe that there ever existed such a person as Jesus Christ,—that he died on the cross,—that he rose from the dead on the third day,—that he ascended upon high to take his place at the right hand of God,—and that he is destined to sit there until all his enemies shall be made his footstool? Not on the ground of human testimony, I assure you: but because God has condescended, through the medium of the facts enumerated, and others of a similar kind, to become Himself the witness of the truth of these facts in my conscience. And this by manifesting to me, the necessary and inseparable connection between *the history of Christ*, and *the free gift of eternal life*. Eternal life freely bestowed, is to me the manifestation of a character and a testimony superior to what is human: but apart from Christ, and from the undertaking in which the scriptures represent him to have engaged, where is the channel through which the blessing could have flowed to me? Independently of a connection formed between the Creator and myself by means of a Mediator, how can I live for evermore? It is, therefore, by understanding the revealed facts of the assumption of human nature by the Son of God,—his sacrifice of human nature as possessed by himself,—and his resurrection from the dead with that nature in himself changed into a nature of a high and heavenly description, and fitted for the enjoyment of an endless life,—that a conviction of the truth of these facts, as means appropriate to and necessarily connected with the

end aimed at, is produced in my mind; a conviction which all the efforts of sophistry and misrepresentation cannot shake, much less overturn. I perceive a connection formed, or, if you will, manifested as existing, between a Being superior to man and man himself; and, tracing this connection at every step, I perceive it to have been the only method by which everlasting life could have been manifested and conveyed to man. Instead, therefore, of the death and resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus, startling me as events in themselves absurd and incredible,—perceiving as I do a close, necessary, and inseparable connection subsisting between them, and the doctrine of eternal life freely bestowed,—they enter into my mind with all the force and irresistibility of self-evidence. Thus, then, although man is the channel by which the scriptures, and the events recorded in them, have been transmitted to me, it is neither the testimony of twelve men, nor of twelve millions of men, which satisfies me of the truth and divine origin of the scriptures. God addressing me through the medium of the facts recorded in these scriptures, and giving me the understanding of these facts, is Himself to me the witness of their truth. I grant that it would be strange, passing strange, even upon natural principles, if twelve men situated and circumstanced as the apostles were should have concocted, and, at the hazard of their lives, should have persevered in proclaiming, any story whatever, much less such a one as that which is contained in the New Testament scriptures: but even although, for the sake of argument merely, I should concede, that the apostles

were impostors and perjured persons, could *man's lie* by any possibility affect *the truth of God?* Could the falsehood of the apostles, under such extraordinary, indeed, perfectly impossible circumstances, in the slightest degree whatever militate against the self-evidence of the glorious truths which they proclaimed? Oh, no: and hence we discover, that it is not the testimony of men which proves to us the truth of what they proclaimed, but that it is the truth of what they proclaimed, once apprehended by us, which proves to us the truthfulness of their character and testimony. The character of Christ Jesus as it is developed in the sacred volume, being superior to any which it ever entered into the mind of man to conceive; and, by its thorough consistency both with itself and with all the events recorded in that book, affording a satisfactory explanation of every part of it, as well as of all the otherwise intricate and perplexing phenomena of this lower world; and, above all, being the only evidence in the light of which the doctrine of *everlasting life freely bestowed* can be understood; carries upon the face of it, and imparts to the volume in which it is developed, in the estimation of myself and of every other spiritually enlightened man, *the broad and unequivocal characters of truth and divinity.*

We now proceed to enquire,

Secondly, *how is the doctrine of eternal life freely bestowed, the evidence to us of our own personal interest in the blessing?*

Were it worth while to have recourse to *a priori reasoning*, it might easily be shewn, that it was from

the very nature of things impossible, for the character of a Being superior to man to be revealed to any person, without being productive of a pleasing effect upon that person's mind. A Being of perfect wisdom could not by revealing himself intend to amuse the individual with mere barren speculations; and a Being of perfect goodness could not by so doing intend to torment him. If God, therefore, were to reveal himself to any of the human race, it might be argued most cogently, *a priori*, that the effects of the revelation behoved necessarily to be practical; and that the first and grand practical effect of it behoved to be, the pacifying of the mind previously in a state of agitation, and the inspiring of it with sentiments of confidence towards the Being now for the first time made known to it.

But instead of reasoning after this fashion, however legitimate the argument may be, I observe, that the doctrine of *eternal life freely bestowed*, is, the moment it is apprehended, seen to have a personal reference, in the three following ways. First. The record or testimony which announces to me *the free gift of life everlasting*, announces to me, likewise, *that I belong to the class of Beings for whom the privilege is intended.* It is not to natural sources of information, but to the same testimony to which I am indebted for my knowledge of eternal life, that I am indebted for my knowledge of the facts, of my being descended from a person called Adam, —of a certain transgression having been committed by him,—and of the result of that transgression to him, to myself, and to the rest of his posterity, having been

the forfeiture of this present life. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Rom. v. 12. My knowledge, then, of my own origin,—of its being the same with that of all who wear the human form,—and of the reason why this present life in the case of every one of the human race comes to an end,—is derived from supernatural revelation. But the same testimony which informs me, that I die in consequence of being one of Adam's descendants, informs me also, that it is upon persons who are Adam's descendants, and not upon beings of either a superior or an inferior order, that everlasting life is conferred. Now can I, without the grossest absurdity and self-contradiction, pretend to be crediting one part of a divine testimony, while I am discrediting another part of it? Can I be believing, *upon the authority of the scriptures as a divine testimony*, that I am one of a vast number of beings who, through the transgression of their common ancestor, have forfeited this present life; and not be believing, *upon exactly the same authority*, that for beings appertaining to this class the inheritance of everlasting life is destined? Can a single reason be pointed out for my conviction of the truth of the one, which is not also a reason for my conviction of the truth of the other? It is upon human beings, that, *according to the divine testimony*, everlasting life is conferred; and am not I, *according to that same testimony*, a human being? *In the divine testimony itself*, then, and not *in any inferior source of information*, have I my *locus standi*, my ground

for believing, that I, as a descendant of Adam, am consequently one of a class which is destined to enjoy everlasting life. Were I to stop here, however, it might be alleged, "this conviction of yours *although resting on divine authority* is, by your own shewing, merely *a belief that you belong to a class of intelligent beings to which everlasting life is confined;* not *a belief that you yourself personally are one of the individuals of that class upon whom the privilege is conferred.*" This, then, leads me to observe, secondly, my personal interest in everlasting life is seen by me in the light of the fact, that, *according to the inspired record,* the privilege is *freely bestowed,* or, that it is *the gift of God.* If it had been intimated in the sacred writings, that eternal life was to be bestowed on individuals of the human race *conditionally,* then it is unquestionable that the individuals of the human race not only might *with propriety,* but must *from necessity* have hesitated, with regard to their own personal interest in the privilege, until they could have been satisfied of their possessing or having performed the condition or conditions on which the enjoyment of it was suspended. But the divine testimony respecting eternal life is the reverse of its being bestowed *conditionally.* Eternal life is revealed as *the gift of God:* that is, it is declared, upon the highest of all authority, to be bestowed *without any reference whatever to terms or conditions performed or to be performed by the individual.* Why, the moment that I apprehend this fact, I perceive, *upon divine authority,* that eternal life is bestowed *on myself.* Not only am

I, *upon divine authority,* one of the descendants of Adam, —one of a class of beings to which eternal life is destined,—but I am also, *upon the same divine authority,* one of the very individuals belonging to that class, to whom the blessing is destined, for *it is bestowed unconditionally.* It is in vain to attempt to get over this by saying, that, although the testimony respecting the mode of enjoying eternal life by all is one and the same, it is possible for me to regard the blessing as bestowed *unconditionally* in the case of *another,* while I regard it as bestowed *conditionally* in the case of *myself;* for, if I regard it as bestowed *conditionally* in my own case, it must be obvious, that what appear to me to be *conditions* of its enjoyment *by me,* such as *faith, repentance,* and so on, must likewise appear to me to be *conditions* of its enjoyment *by others.* But is not this at once to acknowledge, that regarding it as bestowed *conditionally* in the case of *myself,* I necessarily regard it as bestowed *conditionally* in the case of *all* who enjoy it? For while I regard it as bestowed *conditionally* in my own case, how can I regard it as bestowed *unconditionally* in any case whatever? In this way, then, do we come to perceive, that we can only apprehend the blessing of eternal life to be bestowed *unconditionally,* in the light of apprehending it to be bestowed *unconditionally on ourselves;* or, that there is no possibility of our perceiving eternal life to be *unconditionally bestowed,* except in connection with, and in the light of, *our own personal enjoyment of it.* The moment that we perceive eternal life to be bestowed *with-*

out any reference whatever to conditions performed or to be performed by us, that moment, apprehending every obstacle to its bestowment on ourselves as removed, *do we perceive ourselves to be partakers of it.* Satisfied that *eternal life is the gift of God,* we are necessarily satisfied, likewise, that *it is the gift of God to us.* Thus, as Mr. Barclay has admirably shewn, does the same divine testimony which satisfies me *why I die,* satisfy me also *why I have everlasting life.* And thus do I, by the fact that *eternal life is freely bestowed* made known to me, come to understand that *it is a blessing which belongs to myself personally.* But this is not all: for, in the third and last place, the doctrine of *eternal life freely bestowed,* becomes to me *the evidence of my own personal interest in the blessing,* through the medium of my being enabled to comprehend, that *eternal life* is necessarily *life already possessed and enjoyed.* Eternal life! how numerous, how astonishing, how delightful, the ideas suggested by the phrase. Eternal life, it must be obvious, is, properly speaking, the life or existence of a perfect Being,—of one *who has neither beginning of days nor end of life,* Heb. vii. 3,—of one *who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,* xiii. 8,—one of *who is, and who was, and who is to come,* Rev. i. 4. From the same scriptures, which furnish us with these particulars concerning the inherent possessor of eternal life, we learn, that it is the life of one, who, speaking of himself, could declare, *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.* Rev. i. 18. But, with the Being who thus announced his own

perfect and everlasting existence, the sacred records inform us that *we are one*. He bore our nature upon earth —he sacrificed our nature in himself on the cross—he rose with our nature, changed in himself into a divine and heavenly nature, to *the power of an endless life*. From this mutual oneness between Christ and us, we might have drawn a conclusion as to our participation with him in his everlasting existence and other glorious privileges. And in doing so, we could have committed no mistake. But inferences, however legitimate, in a case like this are altogether uncalled for: he himself having expressly declared, *because I live, ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19; and the apostle Paul, in the 15th chapter of first Corinthians, having asserted a necessary connection between his resurrection from the dead and ours. See especially verse 22d. And yet all this, even, is not the immediate cause of the doctrine of *eternal life freely bestowed* acquiring *a present personal direction to our consciences*. *The life* in question being *eternal*, over and above all that has been stated, it is suggested to us, that not merely must the Lord Jesus, as the living one, be *now* in possession of it, but that we, as *living, and moving, and having our being in him*,—as *one with him*,—must be *even now* in possession of it likewise. That as one with Christ, *our life*, viz., *our eternal life*, must be *hid with him in God*. Coloss. iii. 3. Nay, *the life* in question being *eternal*, that is *having neither beginning nor end*, it is suggested to us, that wherever it exists, it exists *necessarily*; and, that as existing *necessarily*, it exists NOW. In a moment the eyes of our

understandings are opened to see, what formerly we were ignorant of, that WE OURSELVES PERSONALLY ARE OF NECESSITY IN THE PRESENT POSSESSION OF EVERLASTING LIFE. It is at this point, and through the medium of this discovery, that conversion takes place. It is by perceiving, that *eternal life* is *life which we ourselves necessarily possess* EVEN NOW, that we are *brought out of darkness into marvellous light*, 1 Peter ii. 9;—that we are *delivered from the kingdom of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.* Coloss. i. 13.—In this way, then, does the doctrine of *eternal life freely bestowed upon the children of men*, acquire a personal direction to our consciences. It is evidence to us of our interest in the blessing, 1st, as Adam's descendants; 2dly, as personally, because freely partaking of it; and, 3dly, as necessarily enjoying it, on account of its nature, EVEN NOW. *This is the record that* GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON.* 1 John v. 11.

* See appendix E.

"Now from these, and such like passages of scripture innumerable, in their plain direct sense, or by infallible consequence, which is the same to the purpose of proof and certainty of conclusion, yea, from the whole tenor of the scripture, as the one voice of the one God, I have communicated to me by the author of scripture an uniform, undoubted, and perfect PERSONAL conviction. I am obliged by the most ridiculous absurdity of our opponents, who are for ever dunning and pestering us with their general nonsense of a GENERAL FAITH, which they talk of as so common, to say PERSONAL conviction or certainty: for it is a self-evident truth, that there neither is, nor possibly can be, any other kind of conviction, certainty, or faith at all, but what is purely and absolutely PERSONAL, and particular, as to the subject wherein it resides, having no being but in a person's own very individual self. PERSONAL conviction therefore, I say, by the above means, I have in very deed, communicated and thoroughly ascertained to me. As on the *one hand, of sin and death*, according to the manner of their entrance, reign, and

Let me now draw the attention of my readers to

THE FACT OF ETERNAL LIFE FREELY BESTOWED,

having been proved to be, as well *the evidence in the light of which we apprehend the scriptures to be a divine testimony*, as *the evidence in the light of which we apprehend our own personal interest in the blessing.* But is not this the very thing which we undertook to prove?

The moment that this is understood, we perceive that it is absolutely impossible for any man who believes the divine testimony, to be labouring under doubts and fears respecting his own future and final destiny. The evidence of *the divine origin of the scriptures*, being the same with the evidence of *our own personal interest in the blessings with which they make us acquainted*,—a conviction *of the divine origin of the scriptures*, and of *our personal interest in the blessings which they reveal*, must enter the mind together. If convinced of *the one*, it is impossible, from the very nature of things, that we

destruction. So also, on the other hand, of righteousness and life, according to the manner of their entrance and eternal reign by Jesus Christ the Lord. As sin and death were transferred and conveyed to me, without any agency or concurrency on my part, from Adam, the figure or type of Him that was to come, through the natural generation; so in like manner, righteousness and life, with the destruction of sin, all sin and all death, as pertaining to me, are transferred and conveyed to me, without any agency or concurrence upon my part, by the glorious and eternally adored Antitype, Jesus Christ, (who is God over all, blessed for ever Amen,) through the faith or knowledge of himself, freely given to me; for it is his own gift and work, the spiritual regeneration, whereby I am born of God, a child of God, and heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, a partaker for ever of Christ and all the benefits of redemption." Barclay's *assurance of faith vindicated*, pages 44, 45; edit. 1825.

should not likewise be convinced of *the other.* The whole matter, indeed, may be stated in terms the most simple and explicit. The character of God, which it is the object of the scriptures to reveal, is made known to us, not through the medium of a series of abstract propositions, like the axioms, problems, and theorems of Euclid, but through the medium of facts and circumstances, in which we ourselves personally have an interest. Facts and circumstances in which we are personally interested, and the character of God, standing thus to each other in the relation of *means* to *an end;* or, *the former* being the medium of revealing to us *the latter;* how is it possible for *the one* to be separated in our minds from *the other?* The benevolence exhibited in the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed,* is what furnishes me with my only correct and scriptural notions of the divine character: but as in apprehending *eternal life* as *a free gift,* I necessarily apprehend it as a blessing *bestowed on myself personally,* who can help thus perceiving, that it is impossible for me *to apprehend God as love,* except in connection with *seeing myself personally to be an object of His love? God is love;* and IN THIS *was manifested the love of God* TOWARDS US, *because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that* WE *might live through him.* 1 John iv. 8, 9. But if *God's character as love,* can thus only be apprehended by us *in the light of the love which he cherishes towards ourselves personally,* what possibility is there, that *we who apprehend His character,*—and without apprehending His character no man is a believer,—should, at the

same time, *be labouring under dread as to his ultimate intentions with respect to us?*

The circumstance of having been the first to point out the complete identity between *the evidence of the truth of the scriptures*, and *the evidence of our own personal interest in the delightful information which they communicate*, is what particularly distinguishes Mr. Barclay. It is far from being my intention to say, that no writer previous to his time had suspected, or had even to a certain degree hinted at this doctrine; but I certainly have no hesitation in affirming, that no writer previous to his time had reduced it to a plain, distinct, and intelligible proposition. And one of the best proofs which I can give, that, however true and important, this is not a view which was likely to have occurred to many, is, that although more than sixty years have elapsed since Mr. Barclay first proclaimed and established it, the great majority of religionists are still as far from apprehending it, as if it had never been brought under public notice. But dropping the question of its paternity, which of course is of subordinate consequence, when it is once understood, with what ease do passages of scripture, and circumstances connected with scripture, commonly felt to be exceedingly perplexing and annoying, become susceptible of an explanation the most clear, self-consistent, and satisfactory.

For instance,—understanding that *the evidence of the truth of Christianity*, and *the evidence of our own personal interest in the* blessings of Christianity, are iden-

tical, we have explained to us the reason of the constant recurrence in scripture of, what has been sometimes denominated, *appropriating language*. In other words, we have explained to us the reason why the inspired writers, when speaking of divine and spiritual blessings, so often express themselves in *the first*, instead of *the third person*: of which practice of theirs we have examples in such passages as, *Jesus was delivered for* OUR *offences, and was raised again for* OUR *justification: therefore, being justified by faith,* WE *have peace with God, through* OUR *Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. iv. 25, v. 1. *This is the record, that God hath given to* US *eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* 1 John v. 11. On the principle just laid down, it is obvious, that expressions denoting our belief in *what God has revealed himself to be*, must be perfectly synonymous with expressions denoting our belief in *the personal interest which we have in the blessings which flow from, and stand inseparably connected with, his revealed character.* As the evidence of *the one* and *the other* is the same, to say *I believe that God is love*, and, *I believe that I myself am an object of his love*, must be identical propositions; and the terms in which they are couched must be to all intents and purposes convertible. If while I believed *God to be love*, I could be cherishing doubts respecting *his love to me in particular*, then it would be necessary for me, and necessary for every writer, possessed of the same experience, who was aiming at accuracy in composition, and was desirous to guard against being misunderstood, so to frame our language when speak-

ing of *God's character as love,* as that no one perusing our statements to this effect, should be liable to confound them with statements respecting *God's love to us,* but that all should at a glance be able to perceive the difference between the one and the other. But, on the contrary, if my apprehensions of *God's character as love,* and my apprehensions of *his love to me,* are so necessarily and inseparably linked and blended together, that I cannot conceive of the one without also conceiving of the other, —as, taught by the sacred volume, I have no hesitation in maintaining that they are,—then it must be to me a matter of perfect indifference, when I am speaking of the subject, whether I represent myself as believing *God to be love,* or as believing *that God loves me.* In either way expressed, my meaning will be precisely the same. The understanding of this complete identity between language importing our belief in *what God is,* and in *what He is to us;* in *the blessings which He is conferring,* and in *His conferring these blessings upon us;* is one of the most valuable keys to the interpretation of the sacred volume. Open the pages of scripture at random, and as you will almost to a dead certainty stumble upon passages which praise the Most High, (not merely for *what He is,* or for *the spiritual blessings which He bestows,* but) on account of *spiritual blessings bestowed upon and enjoyed by the speakers themselves personally,* how can the force and import of such passages be apprehended by you,—nay, how can you in regard to such passages defend the sacred penmen against the charge of having written in a manner

which was calculated to impose on their readers,—unless you perceive the impossibility of spiritual blessings being understood by any one, *except in connection with their being possessed by himself?*—*Jesus*, says the apostle Paul at the close of the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, *was delivered for* OUR *offences, and was raised again for* OUR *justification. Therefore being justified by faith,* WE *have peace with God*, &c. Now, suppose a difference to exist between the evidence upon which we believe that *Jesus died and rose again*, and the evidence upon which we believe that *he died and rose again on our behalf*, as religionists in general insist that there is, and nothing can be conceived more unguarded, and more calculated to lead astray, than such language as this. There is a connection between the fact of *the death and resurrection of Christ*, and the fact of *his death and resurrection having taken place on behalf of the speakers*, recognised in the language employed, which, if it does not really exist in the minds of the persons employing it, renders the use of it by an inspired apostle perfectly unaccountable. But let it be understood, that the grounds upon which we believe both *the one* and *the other* are precisely the same,—that the facts of *Christ's death unto sin once*, and *his resurrection from the dead as having triumphed over sin*, can never enter into our minds as divine truths, except through the medium of, and in inseparable connection with, *a conviction of his death and resurrection having taken place on our account*, as a divine truth likewise,—and it becomes evident, that the apostle was completely

warranted, both there and throughout the rest of his epistles, in using such language as conveyed the idea, that he himself and his fellow Christians believing in *the one,* necessarily also believed in *the other;* and, that by thus continually expressing himself, he has, in a brief but most emphatic and intelligible manner, contrived to present to and keep before our minds this all-important and delightful truth.—Again: *this,* says John in his first epistle, *is the record,* or testimony, *that God hath given to* US *eternal life; and this life is in his Son.* Now, on what principle of interpretation, except that which I advocate, is it possible to understand these words? Observe, that the divine record or testimony, spoken of here, is not that *God hath given eternal life* TO OTHERS, (although this likewise is true, and a proposition which throughout the sacred volume is frequently reiterated), but that *God hath given eternal life* TO US. Is it not expressly implied in the words, *this is the record* or *testimony,* not merely, that the divine testimony is, when believed in at all, *believed in with a personal reference,* as our religionists choose to express themselves; but that *the personal reference of the testimony constitutes the very essence of what is believed? This is* the very *record* or *testimony itself,* and not a mere adjunct, addition, or appendage to it, *that God hath given* TO US *eternal life.* On the principle of the same evidence which proves to us *the truth and divine origin of Christianity,* proving to us likewise *our own personal interest in the blessings of Christianity,* every thing comes out clear. For, on this principle, as

certainly as I am persuaded of *the truth of Christ's mission*, and of *his being the author of eternal life;* so certainly must I be persuaded of *my interest in his mission*, and of *his being the author of eternal life to me.* And thus to be satisfied, that *God hath freely given eternal life through his Son*, and that *He hath given this life to us*, must, upon this principle, be one and the same thing; and, as such, both may be expressed in one and the same proposition. But, on any other principle than that which I have suggested, it is absolutely impossible to explain the words in question. If my own personal interest in the blessings of Christianity, be not necessarily involved in my belief of Christianity, but be merely a conclusion deduced, in one way or another, from my having ascertained, by a regular inductive process, the fact of my having actually believed,—then the words of the passage quoted should have been: *this is the record, that God hath given to persons possessed of a certain qualification, or certain qualifications, eternal life; and as we conceive ourselves to be possessed of the said qualification or qualifications, therefore we venture to infer that we ourselves personally have eternal life.* But, on this principle, it is obvious, that our persuasion of God having given *to us* eternal life, could only at the utmost be *an inference or conclusion of our own minds;* and could not be *the belief of the very record or testimony itself*, as by the apostle it is expressly affirmed to be.

The sameness of *the evidence of the truth of the divine testimony*, and *the evidence* of our own personal

interest in the blessing revealed by that testimony, furnishes us, likewise, with an explanation of the nature of the apostolic preaching, and the success which attended it. There is nothing which is felt to be more puzzling by ordinary professors of religion, than the difference between the effects which resulted from the preaching of Christ's death and resurrection by the apostles, and those which have resulted from the preaching of the same facts by our modern missionaries. How astonishingly great the number of Heathens converted by the one! how few from among the same description of mankind, brought to the knowledge of the truth, attest the triumphs of the other! And yet, as soon as Mr. Barclay's theory is understood, how easily is this difference accounted for. The apostles and early ministers of Christ Jesus, proclaimed the death and resurrection of their divine master, as what they really are *glad tidings;* whereas modern missionaries, with very few exceptions indeed, *have not done so.* The apostles and early missionaries did not propose to their hearers dry and metaphysical theories of natural religion, or statements of the external evidences of Christianity; as if previous to the reception of Christianity itself these behoved to be understood: nor did they present the death and resurrection of the Messiah as facts which their hearers might believe in, and yet be ignorant or uncertain that they themselves had a personal interest in these facts. No; without stopping to enquire, or regarding it as of any consequence, what *the* previous religious sentiments of those whom they

addressed might have been, they at once announced Christianity, not only as a system of blessings in which their hearers had an interest, but as a system of blessings the truth of which their hearers could only apprehend, through the medium of, and in connection with, seeing their own personal interest in these blessings. Instead of first proving the existence and attributes of God independently of revelation, and then deducing revealed religion as a system naturally and necessarily emanating from the Being whose existenee and attributes they had thus proved,—they presented Christianity to the minds of their hearers as a system, which, *in itself*, and particularly *in the very fact of its being glad tidings*, necessarily carried home to every one by whom it was understood indubitable evidence of its divine origin. *We declare* UNTO YOU *glad tidings*, was not merely the language of one, but the import of the language of all the apostles, *how that the promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same* UNTO US *their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again:*———*Be it known* UNTO YOU, *therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached* UNTO YOU *the forgiveness of sins.* Acts xiii. 32, 33, 38. By this mode of procedure,—by thus addressing themselves *directly*, and *as the promulgators of joyful intelligence*, to the consciences of their hearers,—the apostles shewed themselves to be adepts in the divine science which they professed,—to be perfect masters in the knowledge of human nature. By presenting the character of God embodied in a series of facts, they ensured their preaching

being understood by the lowest and the most illiterate of mankind; while by connecting these facts with the final and everlasting happiness of those whom they addressed, they completely satisfied all those cravings of selfishness,—all those anxious enquiries respecting a personal interest in the blessings proclaimed,—which naturally reside, or which at least are apt naturally to spring up, in the human breast. By presenting the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as facts, the divine origin of which could only be perceived by the same means by which their hearers could perceive their own personal interest in these facts; or, in other words, by presenting these facts to their minds as *glad tidings;* the rays of divine truth were concentrated to a degree, and blended with the strongest motives of human conduct in a way, which indicated the highest wisdom,—which in no other topic could find a parallel,—and which, when understood, made an appeal to the conscience that was perfectly irresistible. It was in this very circumstance of their proclaiming the death and resurection of Jesus as *gospel* or *glad tidings,*—and not, as is by many falsely supposed, in the miracles which they wrought,—that the grand secret of the apostle's success lay. Their miracles, like those of their divine master, frequently failed in producing conviction: but the moment that the love of God in Christ borne towards themselves personally came to be apprehended by their hearers, the view of the divine character acquired by such persons was so superior, so self-consistent, and so exhilerating, that at once it carried home conviction to

their minds,—overcoming every prejudice and every species of opposition. Those who were proof against the evidence afforded by *external miracles,* could not resist the self-evidence afforded by *God's character manifested to them as love.* But do our modern missionaries preach as the apostles did? Alas! no. The greater part of them have never yet understood the apostolic preaching, and how, then, can they either understand or apply the lesson taught by the apostolic success? Ignorant themselves of the inseparable connection subsisting between *the belief of the truth,* and *the knowledge of personal interest in the truth believed,* can we wonder at finding that *what God hath joined together,* they in their preaching have ventured, nay, strenuously exerted themselves, *to put asunder.* Christianity, as proclaimed by them, has not been, is not, and cannot be, *glad tidings.* They have not announced, because, without condemning themselves, it has been out of their power to announce, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as facts, the truth and divine origin of which can only be apprehended, in connection with the apprehension of a personal interest in them. On the contrary, they have proclaimed it as *gospel(!),* that the death and resurrection of Christ may be apprehended as facts on divine authority, *while our personal interest in these facts is doubted of, and the conscience, therefore, remains unpacified!* And this, too, while the express language of the apostle, *being justified by faith* WE HAVE *peace with God,* has been staring them in the face! Considering these things, *can* we wonder, on the one hand, at the success

of the apostolic preaching? and, on the other, at the mode of proclaiming Christ's death and resurrection adopted by modern missionaries,—as being destitute of that which gave life and efficacy to the apostolic preaching,—leaving the heathen world almost completely unimpressed?*

Again: by perceiving the truth of Mr. Barclay's theory, respecting the identity of *the evidence of Christianity*, and *the evidence of our own personal interest in the blessings of Christianity*, we perceive the reason of the belief of the gospel being the present possession of everlasting life. That *he who believeth hath everlasting life*, will, as a mere abstract statement, be unhesitatingly assented to by every Calvinistic theologian; but

* From the censure pronounced on our modern missionaries, a sense of justice demands that I should to a certain degree except the Moravians. With whatever errors, in other respects, that body may be chargeable, I have good reason to believe that they make a point of preaching *Christ crucified* and *risen again*, as *a personal ground of hope* to those whom they address; and that they maintain, with considerable distinctness, the existence of an inseparable connection between *the belief of the truth*, and *the personal purgation of the conscience*. This is the secret of the comparatively greater success which has attended their labours among the heathen. On the icy shores of Greenland, and under the torrid zone, instead of *terrifying their hearers*, they have proclaimed *the love of God as flowing freely through Christ Jesus*; and have connected *belief in God's character as love*, with *belief in his love to themselves by those who believe*, as the only medium through which his character as love can be known; the enlightening of numbers of wretches previously sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance and depravity, attesting the value and efficacy of the method of preaching which they have thought fit to adopt. Wesleyan Methodism, which is in but too many respects a system of cant and delusion, is in no small degree indebted for its usefulness and triumphs to the policy of its founder, in having connected with it, although in a way very far from being scriptural, *the personal reference of the gospel*.

when you proceed to enquire, why is this the case? there are ninety-nine chances to one against your receiving a satisfactory answer. "God hath said it, and that is enough for me." True; but has He not also, in terms the most explicit, condescended to explain to us *the cause of a privilege so remarkable being possessed by believers?* And if we are bound to receive as equally true and authoritative *all* that God hath spoken, is not *the cause of the privilege*, when revealed, as much a matter of faith as *the privilege itself?* But the fact is, *the gospel* not being understood by the great majority of our professors of religion, it is impossible that they can understand *the reason of the privileges which believers of that gospel possess.* And yet, how plain the whole matter to one whose mind is enlightened from above! The divine principle of love *shed abroad in the heart* of every individual by whom *the truth as it is in Jesus* is believed in, constitutes in him the present possession,—the first fruits of everlasting life. "Is it possible," exclaims one of my astonished antagonists, "that you mean to insinuate our want of the divine principle of love? Do you mean to deny that we love God?" Why, my dear friends, I mean to deny nothing but what you deny yourselves. I have no way of ascertaining what your sentiments in regard to religion are, except through the medium of the profession which you make; and if in that profession you yourselves deny that you love God, can I be far wrong in supposing you to know better than I do the state of your own minds, and in taking you consequently at your word? "What!

we deny that we love God? How can you suppose us to cherish a sentiment so abhorent to all the views and feelings of our minds?" Not so fast, my good friends. If the cap does not fit you, there is no occasion for your putting it on. I have been taught by the sacred volume, that *we* can only *love God,* in consequence of *God having first loved us;* and in consequence of *His having first manifested His love to us.* 1 John iv. 8—10, 16, 19, &c. Now, if you say that you love God, as the result of the everlasting and unchangeable love which, in and through Christ Jesus, God has manifested Himself to bear towards you; and, that you never did love, and never could have loved God, until and unless He had thus revealed to you the love borne by Himself towards you; all is well: none of my animadversions, in that case, have any reference whatever to you. But if you *say,* or if without saying so in so many words you *wish to have it believed,* that *you love God,*—and yet *are doubtful of the love which He bears towards you,*—you must excuse me for telling you, what your own consciences must have often told you already, nay, what they are whispering to you at the present moment, that *you are deceiving yourselves,* or *wanting to deceive others,* or *both.* Your doubts respecting God's love to you, RENDER IT ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE THAT YOU SHOULD LOVE HIM. Love implies confidence,—one in whom you *cannot repose confidence,* it being *impossible for you to love;*—but if so, how can you, (I appeal to yourselves), love a Being, concerning whose ultimate purposes in your *behalf,* you are by your own admission uncertain?—a

Being who, for aught you know, may hereafter consign you to the regions of endless and unutterable woe?—My friends, none but those who know that *God hath first loved them,* can *love God in reality,*—scripture, the highest authority in such matters, being judge, 1 John iv. 19;—and none but *those who love God,* in consequence of the character of God having been opened up to them *by the manifestation of His love to them to their consciences,* are in the scriptural sense of the term *believers.* And this view of belief clearly implies the truth of Mr. Barclay's theory, that *the evidence of God's character as love,* and *the evidence of our own personal interest in Him,* are one and the same; and that, instead of its being possible to disjoin them, they both enter the mind together. But *love is the present possession of eternal life,* because *love is the divine nature.* GOD IS LOVE. And the nature of God is distinguished from the nature of man, chiefly by this very circumstance; that whereas the nature of man and all that is connected with it *pass away,*—it is essential to the nature of God, wherever it exists and by whomsoever it is possessed, *to last for ever.* Believers, then, by having *the principle of love* dwelling in them, are possessed of that which, as the divine nature, *is destined to exist for evermore.* But *the belief of the truth,—love to God as having first loved us,*—and *the first fruits of everlasting life,*—thus being all of them terms of synonymous import; and it being impossible that this should have been the case, *unless the evidence of God's character,* and *the evidence of his love to us,* had been one and the same; how astonishingly and exactly is

Mr. Barclay's system found to tally with the phraseology, no less than with the views of the sacred volume.

Let me now recal briefly to the reader's notice the various steps of the theory by which he has been led, and point out to him how all of these bear upon the grand conclusion. As a fundamental principle he has been taught, that what is commonly denominated *natural religion*, or *a knowledge of the divine character which is independent of revelation*, is a mere figment of the human brain.* This has been proved against professed unbelievers, by shewing the inconsistency of their notions respecting natural religion, with the views respecting innate ideas so admirably developed by Locke; and by the fact that all the ideas of God which have ever obtained in the Heathen world, receive an adequate and satisfactory explanation when stated to be the result of tradition:—and against professed believers by shewing, that those ideas of the existence and natural attributes

* By the bye, that I may not be suspected of claiming for Mr. Barclay more than is his due, it is proper to mention, that for his fundamental doctrine of *the knowledge of the existence and attributes of God being derived solely from revelation*, he was indebted to Dr. Archibald Campbell, Professor of Church History, in St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews; this gentleman, again, having probably learned it from the writings of the older Socinians. See F. Turretin. Institut. Theol. Elenct. Loc. 1. Quæst. 3. The professor, nearly a century since, as appears from Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1736, and 1737, rendered himself extremely obnoxious to the ecclesiastical judicatories, on account of the pains which he took in inculcating this doctrine. From him, then, it is freely acknowedged, that Mr. Barclay received it. At this point, however, Mr. Barclay's obligations to the learned professor stop. Dr. Campbell seems to have had no suspicion of the important consequences to which his favourite dogma led; nor of the glorious scriptural superstructure which one of *his pupils* was to rear upon it. See appendix F.

of God, the origin of which many of them have pretended to trace up to the unassisted efforts of the human mind, are, by the scriptures themselves, expressly declared to have been derived from revelation. These things were known by the heathens and by philosophers, not because they themselves had found them out, but because *God had shewed them unto them.* Rom. i. 19. The human mind being thus proved to be naturally destitute of any knowledge of God, and unable by any unassisted efforts of its own to acquire such knowledge, I have then shewn, *first,* that our persuasion of any information which may be communicated to us *having an origin superior to that of man,* or, in other words, of its *being a divine testimony,* springs necessarily from *the information itself understood.* This results from the fact, that there is no conceivable evidence, apart from what is contained in itself, by which a divine testimony can be proved. A *testimony* assumed to be *divine,* being by the very terms of the assumption *the strongest of all evidence,* cannot be proved by *human testimony;* any attempt to prove *divine* by *human testimony,* being chargeable with the absurdity of attempting to prove *the greater* by *the lesser:* nay, the very idea that any evidence foreign to itself may be discovered, by which *a divine testimony* can be proved, being equivalent to a denial that *the testimony* in question *is divine.* The truth of *a divine testimony,* therefore, if manifested at all, must be manifested *through the medium of itself,* or *by the understanding of itself;* in other words, instead of *having light thrown upon it* from any other quarter, it

must itself be *a source of light* or *a revelation. Secondly;* a divine testimony, in consequence of thus possessing the nature of *light,* possessing the quality of *self-manifestation,* it must be impossible for any mind, into which such a testimony has shone, to remain ignorant or unconscious of its having done so; and as God has inseparably connected *everlasting life* with *the shining of His testimony into the mind,*—or, which is the same thing, with *the belief of that testimony,*—it must be impossible, even upon this principle, for the mind conscious or certain *of its believing the divine testimony,* to be ignorant or unconscious *of its possessing everlasting life. Thirdly;* not merely has God connected *the possession of everlasting life* with *the belief of his testimony,* in such a way, as to render it impossible for any one *certain that he believes the latter,* not to be *certain also, as a matter of necessary inference, that he possesses the former;* but, it is only in the light of *everlasting life freely bestowed upon ourselves personally,* that the truth and origin of the scriptures *as a divine testimony* can be apprehended. This springs from the fact, that *the evidence which proves to me that the testimony is divine,* is also *the evidence which proves to me my own personal interest in the testimony.* The evidence which proves to me that *the testimony is divine,* is the fact of *eternal life freely bestowed* revealed to me thereby: for, first, this fact makes known to me the character of a Being superior to myself; secondly, the information itself is superior to any which man could have communicated to me; and, thirdly, the whole of

the sacred volume is, in a manner the most complicated and yet the most simple, seen by me to be subservient to the purpose of acquainting me, by a vast variety of methods and under a vast variety of aspects, with this interesting truth,—thereby possessing the attribute of thorough self-consistency. But this same fact of *eternal life freely bestowed,* is also the evidence to me of *my own personal interest in the blessing:* for, *I am one of Adam's descendants,* the very class of beings for whom the blessing is destined;—*I do not deserve the blessing,* the very fact which, *as it is bestowed unconditionally,* shews it to belong to me personally;—and, the blessing as *eternal* existing *necessarily,* I am of course EVEN NOW in the possession of it. Thus, my own personal interest in everlasting life, is not *an inference deduced by me from the circumstance of my having already believed some particular testimony,* but it is *the very record or testimony itself which I do believe.* THIS IS THE RECORD, *that God hath given* TO US *eternal life.* 1 John v. 11. Whence, then, the possibility of any man *believing the divine testimony,* without possessing what Mr. Barclay and others have denominated *the assurance of faith?* Whence the possibility of any man being *perfectly certain* that *the divine testimony is true,* without being *equally* that is *perfectly certain,* that the blessing of *eternal life freely bestowed,* which constitutes the subject matter of that testimony, *belongs to himself?* Nay, can a believer of the gospel, contemplating this all-important subject, and satisfied that the view of it taken by himself is common to him with the other

members of the family of God, avoid catching something of the enthusiasm which dictated these lines of Young:

> What cordial joy, what consolation strong,
> Whatever winds arise or billows roll,
> OUR INTEREST in the master of the storm!
> *Night Thoughts; Night 4th.*

Thus have I endeavoured to establish Mr. Barclay's position, that *the assurance of faith,* or *the certain persuasion of our having a personal interest in the blessings revealed by the divine testimony,* is not *a mere inference of the mind,* depending for its truth upon the correctness of a train of reasoning, but that it *rests directly upon the divine testimony itself.* We believe that *we ourselves have eternal life,* just simply because the divine record, by proclaiming the blessing as *freely bestowed,* proclaims it *as bestowed upon us.* Therefore *we believe that we have it,* because *God has said that we have it.* It is true, that we have been obliged to engage in a lengthened argumentation in reference to the subject: but this has arisen, not so much from any necessity of confirming the faith of those by whom the truth is believed, as from the necessity of tracking and exposing the subterfuges of those by whom that truth is denied. According to the latter class of religionists, it is not possible for a believer to know his own personal interest in everlasting life *directly,* or *from the inspired record itself.** But if the force of the views and reasonings, brought out and prosecuted in the preceding pages,

* See Sandeman, M'Lean, Wardlaw, Haldane, Russell, &c., *passim.*

shall have been apprehended, it must be evident, that unless a man know his personal interest in everlasting life *directly*, or *from the inspired record itself*, there is no other way in which he can know it; *God's love to ourselves personally*, declared in the scriptures to have been evinced by the fact of *his having freely bestowed everlasting life upon us*, when known by us, being the only medium through which *we can know His character as love*, and *the truth of the scriptures in which His character is revealed.* Hence no man ever yet believed, because no man ever yet has been able to believe, the scriptures *as a divine testimony*, except in the light of perceiving *his own personal interest in everlasting life*, as *the very subject matter of that testimony.* To believe the divine testimony *as such*, is to believe it *as gospel* or *glad tidings;* that is, *as imparting information of a nature the most interesting and delightful to ourselves personally.* For, in what other manner than *as glad tidings*, or *as having a personal reference*, is God's character *as* LOVE proclaimed in the scriptures? and in what other manner, than *as glad tidings*, or *as having a personal reference*, can the proclamation of God's character *as* LOVE make its way into the consciences of men? If such, then, be the nature of divine truth, that it shines, and can only shine into the mind, through the medium of *revealing to us blessings which belong to ourselves personally*, how absurdly as well as unscripturally do all those persons speak, who would represent that in which *the very essence of faith in the divine testimony consists*, namely, *faith in it* as glad tidings, or as

having a personal reference, as having, in reality, *no connection with the essence of faith at all!*

Although, to some of my readers, the truth of the doctrine for which I am contending must by this time be sufficiently obvious, I cannot prevail on myself to abandon this part of the subject, without making another effort, as well to do justice to Mr. Barclay, as to render myself intelligible. I am well aware, from sad experience, of the *naturally* insurmountable obstacles which I have to encounter. I know that a representation of *every man who believes the gospel,* possessing *the absolute certainty of everlasting life for himself,* must, like every other view which rises above those conceptions that are natural to the human mind, be felt by many to be exceedingly puzzling and annoying. Nay, as it is impossible to reconcile this view, with the notions which are presented to us from our earliest years by persons who have undertaken the office of public instructors in matters of religion,—notions which, from this circumstance, no less than from their adaptation to the natural constitution of the mind, become in process of time, as it were, a part of ourselves,—I know, that in a great majority of cases, it will be difficult to procure even a hearing, much less a favourable reception, for what, at first sight, must appear to be extravagant and self-contradictory. But neither can I forget, that, among the devotees of the popular school, there are always some, who, although for a long period *they have been lying* at the pool of ordinances, to use a

favourite expression of their own, have never yet *from the troubling of the waters* derived any advantage; and who, from the state of mental disquietude in which they are, keep looking on every hand for relief, and putting to every passer by the old and hacknied question, *who will shew us any good?* For the sake of such persons, the two or three paragraphs immediately following have been written. To them I would propose, as *directly* a means of administering relief to their minds, *the gospel;* that is, *the character of God* made known and developed in the scriptures *as of itself, when understood, glad tidings:* and, as the system of Mr. Barclay in regard to *the assurance of faith,* is the only one, that I know, which I have found to tally with the leading and otherwise inexplicable phenomena connected with *the belief of the truth,* I would again, in as clear and simple a manner as I can, and yet with some little variety, propose that system to them, as what, if understood by them, will be the means of relieving their minds from a vast load of incumbrances and embarrassments.

The first grand peculiarity of the system is, that *the truth of the divine testimony,* and *the interest in that testimony possessed by ourselves personally,* shine into the mind at one and the same moment. While the supporters of other systems of religion have adopted it as one of their fundamental principles, that God's character may be known, and his record believed in, by persons who are nevertheless *uncertain of their having a personal interest in the blessings which, through the medium of that record, God* reveals himself as bestowing;

it is the leading principle of Mr. Barclay's theory, that no man ever yet knew God, or believed in the divine record, except *in connection with, and in the light of, God's love to himself personally.* Mr. Barclay has proved, with irresistible force of scripture evidence, first, that there is no knowledge of God in the mind of man naturally, and that independently of revelation man has neither the means nor the power of acquiring such knowledge; and, secondly, that in the great majority of cases where the existence and attributes of God have been heard of, neither are the notions adopted respecting them correct, nor are they productive in the mind of absolute certainty. The notions adopted respecting them are not *correct,* for in such cases God is supposed to be a Being who bestows his favours *conditionally;* and these notions are not productive of *absolute certainty,* for a Being who bestows his favours *conditionally* must be *like ourselves;* and it is impossible for a Being *like ourselves* to inspire the mind with *perfect confidence.* He, therefore, who supposes God to bestow his favours *conditionally,* is taking *a false view of the divine character;* and while he continues to do so, it is impossible for him to be *absolutely certain respecting the divine existence, threatenings, and promises.* But *the degradation of God to the level of ourselves,—the supposition that He is a Being altogether such as we are,*—is common naturally to the whole family of man. In this fact do we behold the origin of all that doubt and uncertainty respecting what God is and says,—of all that real and practical atheism of the human mind,—

which was originally manifested in the first transgression of our common progenitors, and which has since been manifested in the crimes of every description committed by their posterity. This being the case, then, how consistent with themselves are the scriptures when they inform us, that in order to our receiving any testimony *with absolute and infallible certainty*, it must be *on the authority of a Being manifested to us as man's superior*. And as no being who bestows his favours *conditionally*, or *as man does*, can be conceived of by us *as man's superior*, He who is revealed to us *as our superior* must bestow His favours *freely* or *unconditionally*. To explain myself somewhat more fully. It being impossible for us to receive any testimony as absolutely and infallibly true *upon the authority of man*, in order to the reception of testimony as absolutely and infallibly true, there must be *the revelation of a Being divine*, that is, *superior to man*. To receive testimony, then, *as infallibly true*, and to receive it *as divine*, are synonymous terms. But God manifested *as man's superior*, or *in his divine character*, is manifested as bestowing eternal life not *conditionally*, or *as man would do*, but *unconditionally*, or *as man would not do*: and when seen as bestowing eternal life *unconditionally*, he is seen as bestowing it *upon ourselves*. Here, then, we get hold of the last link in the chain of connected principles. We perceive eternal life *to belong to ourselves*, because we perceive it *to be bestowed unconditionally*;—in perceiving it *to be bestowed unconditionally*, we acquire *our first* correct ideas of the divine

character, or learn for the first time *what God is ;*—and in acquiring *the knowledge of what God is*, we become capable, for the first time, *of receiving truths revealed to us upon His authority or testimony*, that is, *of receiving them as absolutely and infallibly true*. What is all this, however, but the statement, under another form, of Mr. Barclay's leading principle? The mind of man, as that excellent writer has shewn, can only be in one of three states with regard to the divine character. Either, first, it has never heard of it at all; or, secondly, it has heard more or less concerning it, but has not understood it; or, thirdly, it has both heard of and understood it. The first was the case of Adam at the moment of his creation,* and is that of every human being as he comes into the world;—the second was the case of Adam, from the time that the first command was issued, till there was revealed to him the future Messiah, and is that of the great majority of the human race, whether

* How absurd in point of fact, notwithstanding all the charms with which a splendid poetic imagination has been able to invest it, is the soliloquy which Milton puts into Adam's mouth immediately after his creation seen to be, the moment that Mr. Barclay's leading principle is understood.

> Thou sun, said I, fair light,
> And thou, enlightened earth, so fresh and gay,
> Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
> And ye that live and move, *fair creatures, tell,*
> *Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?*
> NOT OF MYSELF; BY SOME GREAT MAKER THEN,
> IN GOODNESS AND IN POWER PRE-EMINENT; &c.
>
> *Paradise Lost;* book 8th.

Why, what room was there for a subsequent revelation of the Deity, to a being who could reason naturally in a manner so acute as this?

Heathens, Mahometans, Jews, or nominal Christians; —and the third was the case of Adam after the first promise had been revealed to him, and is the case of the few by whom the divine character has in every age been not merely heard of but likewise understood. But as the character of God can only be understood in the light of everlasting life seen by us to be *freely bestowed,* and as everlasting life can only be seen by us to be *freely bestowed* in the light of our seeing it to be *bestowed on ourselves,* therefore, instead of *the knowledge of the character of God,* or *of what God is,* entering into our minds *previous to our acquiring the knowledge of our having a personal interest in the blessings which he has revealed,*—as all men who have merely natural, that is, false notions of the subject imagine,—*the knowledge of what God is,* and *of our personal interest in life everlasting,* enter our minds together, as Mr. Barclay has demonstrated. And as, without knowing what God is, we can receive nothing as true *upon His authority,* therefore, *the truth of the divine testimony,* and *the interest in that testimony possessed by ourselves personally,* likewise shine into our minds *at one and the same moment.*

2. Another peculiarity of the Berean system is, that, according to it, every man who possesses *the absolute and infallible certainty of everlasting life,* must have derived that certainty *from the witnessing of the Holy Ghost.* Can any system of religion, with the exception of Mr. Barclay's, be named, which has it not for one of its axioms, that *many may* be perfectly confident

of God's love to themselves personally, whose confidence, after all, may be groundless and presumptuous? To hear the votaries of the popular theology express themselves, one would be tempted to think, that instances of persons possessing *an assured confidence of God's love to themselves* were by no means uncommon; and that there was nothing against which believers of the gospel required to be more on their guard, than *being betrayed into the indulgence of such a feeling.* How great is the astonishment of the child of God, when first brought to the knowledge of the truth, to discover, that the religious theory which from his earliest years he has been instructed in, is entirely destitute of any foundation either in fact or in scripture! That instead of men who are *absolutely certain of God's love to themselves personally,* being frequently met with in the walks of life, to encounter such persons is *one of the rarest things in the world:* and that instead of this *absolute certainty* being a matter which the believer should be suspicious of in others, and be on his guard against in himself, it is actually neither more nor less than *the faith of God's elect!* Nay, that under the odious name of *presumption,* unbelieving men are actually, although ignorantly, stigmatizing *the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost! to have the Spirit bearing witness with* or *to our spirit, that we are the children of God,* Rom. viii. 16; *to know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness,* 1 John v. 19; *to have, as believing on the Son of God, the witness* or *testimony in ourselves,* verse 10;—which when professed by us as our

personal experience, is regarded by the great mass of ordinary professors as the acmé of daring and blasphemous presumption,—is discovered by every man, with whom is *the secret of the Lord,* and to whom *he shews his covenant,* Psalm xxv. 14, to be the common and unalienable privilege of the whole family of God. It is true, the believer soon finds out, that it is possible for a man to have a tolerably good opinion of himself, and of his standing in the sight of God, without being a Christian. That it is possible for such an one to fancy himself in possession of evidences of his personal Christianity so bright and shining, as to warrant him in drawing a favourable conclusion respecting his spiritual state and circumstances, and yet all the while to be labouring under self-delusion. But whatever *the confidence* of an individual of this description may be, the man who knows the truth, and is possessed of a little experience, soon discovers, that it neither *amounts to* nor is *of the nature of* that *absolute and infallible certainty of everlasting life,* which *the belief of the gospel,* and *the witnessing of the Spirit,* alone and necessarily produce. The confidence of such an individual, as it is *founded upon human evidences,* and is at the utmost merely *of the nature of a human inference,* so is it any thing but *firm, stable,* and *steadfast.* It is that sort of confidence which in a moment of animal excitement may be *high,*—and next moment may give place to *the lowest despondency.* How absurd, as well as unscriptural, to confound a confidence like this, which is liable to be interrupted continually by misgivings, with

that which the Holy Ghost inspires;—which, as it is originally imparted by means of the manifestation of the character of God to the conscience, and is maintained by means of the continued manifestation of the same, so it neither ebbs nor flows, but is experienced to be throughout the whole of the Christian's career unchangeably the same. When ordinary religious characters speak of *the absolute certainty of everlasting life*, as if by any possibility it could merit the name of *presumption*, little are they aware of the libel which they pronounce on *the witnessing of the Spirit*. From the language which they use, we must conclude it to be their opinion, that the Spirit is *changeable like themselves;* at one moment *menacing the conscience with everlasting tortures*, and at another *vouchsafing to it the prospect of future felicity*. But, in opposition to all this, how delightful for us who believe the truth to know, that, so far from the Spirit at one time *contradicting*, what at another time *he declares*, his *witnessing* is uniformly *one and the same*. That while he never fails to point out to us *death as sin's wages*, he never fails to point out to us likewise *everlasting life as God's gift;* always presenting to us *the one*, in inseparable connection with *the other*. And that the peace which he speaks thereby to our consciences is not *transient* and *fluctuating*, but, like the revealed character of God through which it is communicated, *sure, certain*, and *steadfast;*—that it is not *a fountain which may be dried up*, but, in the beautiful language of our Lord, *a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. I grant to you, then, that you

may produce to me abundance of persons, who have *a sort of confidence,* which as *the world gave it,* so *the world may take it away;* of persons who, although satisfied that *God loves them now,* are more or less dubious as to *His continuing to love them hereafter,* and whose confidence, therefore, may come to an end: but produce to me, if you can, a single person who, having once possessed *the absolute certainty of everlasting life,* has had this *absolute certainty,*—this *witnessing of the Spirit,*—in him overturned? Nay, as it is a privilege common to all believers, to have *the Spirit witnessing with* or *to their spirit that they are the children of God,* produce to me, if you can, *a believer* who is *destitute of this witnessing;* and, consequently, *destitute of the absolute and infallible certainty of life everlasting?**

3. The only other peculiarity of Mr. Barclay's system of which I intend taking notice is, that, according to it alone, is *faith a conviction of the unchanged and unchangeable character of God.* That God is an unchangeable Being, is a doctrine which every sect of religionists will, in so many words, be ready to acknowledge. But is their verbal admission to be received, as, in all

* Many say, that "*they would fain possess this absolute certainty of everlasting life;*" little aware that, by the use of such language, they prove themselves *to be totally ignorant of the way in which it comes to be possessed.* Great is the number of open and avowed infidels who have become so, after having for years distressed their consciences *with attempts to procure a fixed and settled peace of mind:* the ill success of all such self-righteous efforts, furnishing a practical comment on the apostolic declarations, that salvation is attained to, not *by the works of the law* or *by any works whatever,* but *by the hearing of faith,* Gal. iii. 5; and that *God is found,* not of those who seek Him, but of those who *seek Him not,* Rom. x. 20.

cases, the expositor of their real sentiments concerning Him. Does He actually appear to their minds to be unsusceptible of change? Alas! no. Strong and unwarranted as the assertion may seem to be, it is nevertheless true, that according to no system of religion, except the Berean, is it possible for the mind to view God in any other light than as *a changeable Being*. The Socinian who fancies that, whatever may be his ultimate destiny, there may nevertheless be inflicted on him the most dreadful torments in a future state of existence;—the Arminian whose expectations of happiness hereafter are thoroughly and avowedly conditional;—and the Calvinist who rests his hopes of heaven on his undergoing a change of mind, without ever being able to attain to the absolute certainty of his having experienced it;—are all, although with some shades of difference in their respective opinions, imagining, that *God's treatment of them hereafter, so far from being fixed and certain, is still thoroughly contingent:* and that *under one set of circumstances it will be totally different, from what under another set of circumstances it will be.* Now let any Socinian, Arminian, or Calvinist, gifted with a little candour and common sense, ask himself the following questions: "Can I be regarding Him as *an unchangeable Being*, Whom my creed is compelling me to regard as *changing His purposes towards me, with every change of character and conduct which I myself am conscious of undergoing and exhibiting?* Can I be regarding Him as *an unchangeable Being*, Who one day appears *to me to be my friend*, and the next to be my *foe*; Whose

intention it seems to be one day *to raise me to heaven,* and of Whom the next I am suspicious that he may after all *plunge me into the lowest hell?* If God be *unchangeable,* must not His feelings towards me, and His treatment of me, *as respects a future and unchangeable state,* be *independent of all the changes which I myself may undergo?*" All the popular systems of theology teach their votaries to cherish the supposition, that in the event of their coming to be *at some future period of their lives,* what they are not or may not be *now,* God's intentions with respect to them *will* or *may be different* from what they are *now.* But can such sentiments be cherished, and yet the Being who is the object of them *be regarded as unchangeable?* Can his character appear to me *unchangeable,* unless I am able to see that, whatever changes I may undergo, *my final destiny is and must be the same?* At this very point it is, that the system of Mr. Barclay diverges from, and stands out gloriously contrasted with, all the systems of which we have been speaking. Like them it not merely admits in so many words that *God is unchangeable,* but the view of God which it represents the believer as taking is that of *His being unchangeable.* According to the Berean scheme, when God is believed in by any one as *bestowing eternal life unconditionally,* He is believed in by him as *bestowing it upon himself;* and as, from the beginning till the close of his Christian career, the view of God taken by the believer is always that of a Being *who bestows eternal life unconditionally,* of course he continues always to view himself as a partaker

of the blessing. But is not this conviction of *the unchangeableness of the divine purposes in regard to himself,* thus necessarily involved in his possession of *the absolute certainty of everlasting life,* one most important view of *the unchangeableness of the divine character?* Nay, until this be attained to, by what possibility can God be regarded as *unchangeable?* As the ordinary professor of religion is at one time elevated by the hopes of heaven, and at another depressed by the fears of hell; and as the changes which are thus continually taking place in his frame of mind, are necessarily connected with changes in his notions respecting God; what are all his statements of belief in the unchangeableness of the divine character but mere *verbiage?* While he who continues *with absolute certainty* to regard himself *as an heir of everlasting life,* continuing to cherish *one most important view of the divine unchangeableness,* is there not clearly involved in *the very nature* of such a person's faith *the conviction of God being unchangeable?*—Still farther: it is not merely in continuing to regard ourselves *as the heirs of everlasting life,* that we perceive God *to be unchangeable;* for our very first real view of the gospel, was itself a perception of *the unchangeableness of His character.* While the faith of the ordinary religionist, however much he may disguise it, is merely an effort on his part to render God *at some future period,* what he is suspicious that God is not *now;*—while the votary of the appropriating scheme is labouring *by an act of the mind,* and the Sandemanian by his painful work of *faith, and love,*

and self-denied obedience, to force themselves into the opinion, that God may look upon them *herefater,* with sentiments different from those which He cherishes towards them *now;*—the Berean in believing, on the authority of the divine record, with *absolute and infallible certainty,* that *God hath given to him eternal life,* beholds the sentiments of the Supreme Being towards himself to be the same *now,* which He has cherished towards him *from everlasting,* and the same which He will cherish towards him *to everlasting.* That a change has taken place is undeniable: but the change has taken place in the believer himself, not in God;—it has not been a change from hatred to love on the part of God, but a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thereby from hatred to love on the part of the believer;—it has not consisted in God's manifesting himself to the believer to have a character *now* which he had not *formerly,* but in His manifesting Himself to the believer *in the unchanged and unchangeable character which from everlasting He has had.*

But even yet my task is not finished. I expect, at this point, to be assailed by some such language, as: "Numerous as have been the facts and arguments adduced and insisted on by you, in proof of *the belief of the divine testimony,* necessarily involving in it *the belief of our own personal interest in life everlasting,* we must confess that we are far from being satisfied. So many passages occur in the sacred volume, where the inspired writers both seem to hesitate respecting their

own spiritual privileges, and to be desirous of encouraging a similar hesitation in others, that we must decline acceding to a system which, as a matter of course, sets all such passages aside. True, you have alleged and endeavoured to shew, that *conditional language* is employed in scripture, as an indispensable means of elevating us to the conception of spiritual and eternal blessings as *unconditionally bestowed.* That the mind of man being cast naturally in a *conditional* mould, can only be satisfied *by having conditions of everlasting life presented to it,* and *by seeing these conditions completely fulfilled;* and also, that it can only rise to the conception of what is *unconditional,* by the contrast between *it* and what is *conditional.* But is this really all that is intended by the use of *conditional* language in scripture? Are there not many passages which you find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with your theory? And while such stumbling blocks stand in our way, can you expect us, as men desirous of paying due respect to the scriptures and their divine author, to sacrifice *their positive declarations,* to *the reasonings* of any man, however ingenious and however apparently conclusive?"

In answer to all this, I would again avail myself of the light and assistance afforded me by Mr. Barclay.

I not merely admit, as I have already done, that the scriptures, when treating of the enjoyment of divine and spiritual blessings on the part of the people of God, do employ *conditional* language; but I have now to add, that, although in explaining such language on the principle of its having been adapted to *the natural*

structure of the human mind, and of its having been intended, by means of contrast, *to raise it to the conception of everlasting life as unconditionally bestowed,* I set before my readers a most important truth, I nevertheless did not exhaust all the views which I had to present to them respecting the use of it. I have intentionally reserved till now, a view of the subject, which, I conceived, could be best introduced here; and which is necessary to the complete developement of my system. It is perfectly true, that but for the use of *conditional* language, we could not have risen to the conception of any blessing as *unconditionally* bestowed; but, besides answering this purpose, *conditional language,* as employed in scripture, has another most important end to serve. Although eternal life is bestowed *unconditionally,* and although, *as thus bestowed,* we who believe the truth know that *nothing can by any possibility deprive us of the ultimate possession of it;* yet is the enjoyment of eternal life, or of the blessings connected with eternal life *while we are upon earth,* in the strictest sense of the term *conditional.* The divine testimony considered as *gospel,* or as *having a reference to a future state,* proclaims to me that *eternal life is the gift of God:* but the same testimony, considered as *having a reference to our state and circumstances while here below,* proclaims to me, in language which as enlightened from above I can neither misunderstand nor overlook, that the approbation of my own conscience, and the favour of my Heavenly Father, are, while I continue in this vale of tears, dependent on the course of conduct

which I pursue, and *the obedience which I render to the divine commandments.* 1 Corinth. ix. 23—27. It is only *in proportion as I keep God's commandments,* that I have *my present reward,* or *the present enjoyment of everlasting life.* Not that faith and present obedience are *conditional* in the sense of *originating with ourselves;* for, so far from this being the case, they are *the gift of God,* no less than *that life everlasting of which they constitute the first fruits:* but that *they are so,* in so far as, *according to the degree in which faith exists and obedience to the divine commandments is yielded by us, in that same degree is eternal life now possessed and enjoyed by us.* Now *the conditional language* of scripture has a reference to this fact likewise: to suggest to and keep before our minds the only terms on which divine and spiritual enjoyments can be realized by us, while we are upon earth, being one of the grand purposes for which it has been employed.

It is really quite surprising how little this plain and obvious solution of the difficulties occasioned by the use of *conditional* language in scripture has been understood. When ordinary religionists have encountered a passage like that of the apostle John: *if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things: beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God:** which occurs in an epistle in which the inspired writer is reiterating incessantly his own perfect confidence, and the perfect confidence of his fellow-believers, in the relationship borne towards

* 1 John iii. 20, 21.

them by God as their Heavenly Father; such persons have preferred representing the apostle as *contradicting himself, by calling in question the very relationship which he had so confidently asserted,** to admitting, that when he expressed himself *diffidently* in this particular instance, he must have been speaking in reference to a point totally different from that which was the subject of his *confidence.* I am perfectly confident of the relationship in which I stand to my earthly parents, and of the fact that it is impossible for me by any action of mine to alter, affect, or destroy that relationship: but, as I am by no means confident that I shall always conduct myself towards my earthly parents as a child ought to do, I am by no means confident that I shall always merit and obtain their approbation. So the apostle John himself was perfectly confident, and knew that all who had the same spirit of faith with himself were perfectly confident likewise, that they had God for their Heavenly Father; and that in virtue of this they should necessarily and infallibly inherit life everlasting: but he had by no means the same confidence, that either he or they should always so conduct themselves, while on earth, as not to excite the divine displeasure. In other words, knowing that he and his fellow-believers, although *partakers of the divine nature,* had in them likewise *a nature continually prone to evil,* he knew that it was only by restraining, and in so far as they did restrain, the tendencies of *this latter*

* 1 John ii. 25, 27; iii. 1, 2, &c. See Wardlaw *on the Assurance of Faith*, and works of a similar stamp.

nature, that they could escape the present censure or condemnation of their own hearts, and of their Heavenly Father. He knew, upon divine authority, that eternal life was *unconditionally* bestowed; and therefore he was, in common with them, *certain, infallibly certain*, of ultimately enjoying it: but he knew, upon the same authority, that the *present* enjoyment of spiritual blessings was *conditional;* and therefore found it impossible to speak with *the same confidence*, respecting the *present* enjoyment of such blessings in his own case, and in that of others.

That eternal life is promised and enjoyed *unconditionally*, while *spiritual blessings*, or *the first fruits of eternal life upon earth*, are promised and enjoyed *conditionally*,—understanding *conditionally* in the sense already explained,—I have no hesitation in proposing as that view of the subject, which, when combined with the views already presented, will, if understood, be found to satisfy the mind. The man who believes, that *this is the promise that God hath promised us even eternal life*, believes, that as the privilege is bestowed *unconditionally*, it is bestowed upon himself *certainly and infallibly;* or, that there is *no possibility of his coming short of the attainment of it:* but as the scriptures abound with exhortations and warnings to those who have believed the truth, and with severe denunciations against them in the event of their transgressing the divine commandments, how is it possible for the believer to reconcile his enjoyment of life everlasting as *a free gift*, with his liability to forfeit the divine *appro-*

bation, except on the principle, that, while eternal life is, in virtue of the divine purpose and promise, *certainly* and *infallibly secured to him*, the approbation of his Heavenly Father, during his passage through this present world, is only his *conditionally; depending on the degree in which he is now possessed of, and influenced by, that knowledge of God, in which, as our blessed Lord has informed us, life everlasting consists.** John xvii. 3.

A few additional observations will serve to place the whole matter in a still clearer light.

* Men disposed to think and investigate will follow out this subject a little farther. The relations of divine truth are, if one may so express oneself, so infinitely diversified, that there is more than one sense in which eternal life hereafter may be said to be *conditionally bestowed*, as there is more than one sense in which the enjoyment of the first fruits of it here may be said to be *unconditional*. On the one hand, eternal life hereafter may be said to be *conditionally bestowed*, in so far as, without the *conditions* of our being raised hereafter in a nature fitted for it, and of our then possessing attributes and qualities corresponding to it, there would be no possibility of our enjoying it: but any objection to eternal life being *the gift of God* which might be started on this ground, is at once repelled and removed by observing, that he who bestows *freely* the life itself, bestows *freely* likewise all that is essential to it, and implied in it. On the other hand, *spiritual blessings*, or the *first fruits of eternal life* here, may be said to be enjoyed *unconditionally*; for, *our belief of the truth*, and *conduct springing from and corresponding to this belief*, are not in reality the result of *any self-originating power in man*; that is, do not, in reality, *proceed from man himself*, but are blessings which God is pleased to bestow, *without any desert of them on the part of man*: the term *conditional*, therefore, when applied to the enjoyment of such blessings by man, meaning nothing more than this, that it is only in connection with and in proportion to certain privileges bestowed by God upon people here, that certain other privileges shall be bestowed upon them by Him here likewise. In a word, when the subject comes to be a little more attentively considered, the terms *conditions* and *means* are found, in this case, to be synonymous: *conditions of eternal life* signifying, *the means of imparting that privilege*, and *the means of imparting to us the knowledge* of the subject.

1st. It is only in consequence of our being enabled to view eternal life as *the gift of God*, or as *unconditionally bestowed*, that the principle of selfishness in us is *controlled and subdued*. We are informed by the apostle Paul, in 2d Corinth. v. 14. 15, that one grand effect of the knowledge of the love of Christ is, *to constrain us henceforth not to live unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for us, and rose again*. And the same apostle, speaking elsewhere in the name of the people of God, says, *none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself*, Rom. xiv. 7. That is, while the natural propensities of the human mind lead men continually to aim at the gratification of self, and to endeavour in one way or another to promote what they conceive to be their own interests, the genuine effect of Christian principle, in so far as it exists and operates, is to check and control these selfish propensities. But how can *selfishness* be checked and controlled, except in consequence of a principle of *generosity* being implanted? and whence can a *generous principle* derive its origin, except from our perceiving eternal life to be *unconditionally*, and therefore *certainly* secured to us? The following remarks, in proof and illustration of this, will, I hope, be sufficient to convey my meaning. The grand characteristic of Christianity is, that it constrains us to make not *ourselves* but *God* the end of our actions;—that it causes us, in the good works which we perform, to aim not *at promoting any private or personal advantage of our own*, but *at glorifying our Heavenly Father*, or at manifesting to others *His*

character, through the medium of the effects which revealed truth is observed by them to produce upon us. The ordinary reader will at once apprehend my meaning, if, adopting a homely mode of expressing myself, I observe, that the grand characteristic of Christianity is, to constrain those in whom it dwells, instead of *retaining their good works for their own use,* cheerfully and constantly to *give them away.* But naturally and necessarily selfish as the human mind is, how, on the principles of religion commonly professed, is any man able to do this? If I do not perceive that eternal life, being *unconditionally bestowed,* is *certainly and indefeasibly secured to me,* I necessarily imagine that the privilege is *conditional and contingent;* and that my good works are in one way or another *requisite in order to furnish me with a title to it:* and my good works being thus indispensable to my possessing any peace of mind at all in the prospect of eternity, *I cannot afford to part with them.* They are the price which I bring in my hands,—they are the purchase money which I offer to the Sovereign of the universe,—as an equivalent for what he has to bestow; and until I shall have driven my bargain with him, I feel no inclination to part with my property. Not more selfish is the voluptuary, the miser, and the man of ambition, than am I as a religious character, in the event of my being *uncertain* with respect to my state and circumstances hereafter. My conscience naturally requiring all that I can do,—aye, and more than I can do,—in order to satisfy its cravings, I have nothing to give to God; or, I cannot help,

in the beautiful and expressive language of scripture, *living unto myself.* Hence it is that all the religion which comes short of *the unconditionality,* and therefore *the absolute certainty* of eternal life, whether Deistical, Socinian, Arminian, or Calvinistic, is distinguished by this circumstance,—that the party professing it, regarding the possession of eternal life as in one way or another dependent on himself, is, from the very necessity of the case, performing his acts of devotion and good works *with a view to fulfil the conditions upon which it is supposed to depend,* or is necessarily *selfish in his religion.* Nay, the principle of selfishness in him, so far from being *less active* than it is in those who by the vileness of their character and conduct are guilty of outraging public opinion, is in reality operating *more powerfully;* for, as eternity is of more importance than time, the man who becomes religious *upon natural principles,* and conceives that *upon himself* his state for eternity depends, will necessarily make greater exertions for the attainment of his object, and, consequently, for the gratification of *self* in this particular way, than were ever made by the open profligate, in order to procure to himself gratifications of another kind. Witness the account of himself, previous to his conversion, given by the apostle Paul. It is in this way that the Pharisaical character is formed and matured. And in this way do we discover, that while *taking natural views of religion,* or while *ignorant of the unconditionality of eternal life,* man, not merely as regards *other matters,* but as regards religion *itself,* is

thoroughly, rootedly, essentially selfish.—Let us now reverse the picture and observe, that it is with a view of eternal life as *unconditionally bestowed,* and therefore as *certainly bestowed on himself,* that a principle of *generosity* for the first time enters into the mind of man. And the reason is, that it is not until we have the certainty of possessing everlasting life, that we have either the disposition or the capacity to be generous. Until then, we have not the disposition to be so; for whence can proceed love on our part towards God, except from the knowledge of His love towards us? Until then, we have not the capacity to be so; for as generosity consists in the giving away that which belongs to us, how can we afford to part with our good works, until we know that we no longer stand in need of them ourselves? and how can we know that we require them not, except by knowing, that, independently of all righteousness of our own, eternal life is secured to us? Little, little, alas! do our praters about religion know of the constitution of the human mind. To hear them speak, one would suppose it to be their opinion, either that man can of himself satisfy his own conscience; or that, while the conscience remains unsatisfied, man is able to exhibit generosity of principle and character *by living to God.* But if man can satisfy his own conscience; or, if, with a conscience unsatisfied, he can afford to give away his good works; what use or necessity, pray, is there for the manifestation to him of the character of Christ Jesus? Understanding that man cannot by all his good works satisfy the cravings of conscience;—that conscience is

a fathomless abyss which no actions of man can fill up, and that while, like the horse-leech, it continues to utter the unappeasable cry, *give, give,* it is impossible for man to do otherwise than *live to himself;* —I can understand the value of the righteousness and blood of the Son of God: seeing that they satisfy the most urgent demands of conscience, and supersede the necessity of performing a single action with a view to procure to ourselves everlasting life, by shewing us eternal life certainly and indefeasibly secured to us by our union with the Saviour. But on the supposition of our being able to satisfy conscience ourselves, of what value to us is all the information given in the scriptures respecting *the Lord of Glory?* If we can *live to God* with consciences unsatisfied, or with doubts and fears respecting our future state prevailing in our minds, for what purpose is *the blood of Jesus* set before us in the sacred volume? The fact is, that upon the principles of religion ordinarily professed, the history of Jesus is an idle tale, which, if such principles were my own, I should hold myself entitled to disregard and despise. For, as it is to ourselves, after all, that, according to the ordinary notions of religion, we are indebted for the pacification of our consciences, what is the profession of our being indebted for it to *the blood of Jesus,* but a specimen of vile, unmeaning, hypocritical cant? But, blessed be God, we who are believers *have not so learned Christ.* The effect of the manifestation to us of eternal life as *unconditionally,* and therefore certainly bestowed on us through

the Son of God, has been,—what all other means had failed in accomplishing,—*the satisfaction of our consciences;* and our consciences once satisfied, *a death blow has been given in us to the principle of selfishness.* From the moment that we saw eternal life secured to us through the Son of God, *we became capable of acting generously.* No longer requiring our own good works to speak peace to consciences already pacified by the work of Christ Jesus, we found that we could afford *to give away these good works;* or, in the language already quoted, that we could afford *to live, not unto ourselves, but unto God.* And Oh! how obvious is it to us now, that, as the object of the scriptures is to introduce into the mind of man a principle capable of combating, controlling, and subduing *the selfishness of his nature,*—and as, from the constitution of the human mind, it is impossible for this object to be effected while doubts and fears respecting *the gratuitous and certain enjoyment* of everlasting life remain,—the scriptures can never, by representing eternal life to be *conditionally bestowed* and thereby giving birth to *doubts and fears* in the mind, labour to counteract and defeat their own object.

2. Understanding that everlasting life itself is *unconditionally,* but that the first fruits of it upon earth are *conditionally enjoyed,* I can understand the purpose which God has in view, by *those threatenings of punishment which he has addressed to his people in the sacred volume;* or, I can understand, that threatenings of punishment can only, at the utmost, be to them *a secondary and subordinate principle of* obedience. No parent who has

paid the slightest attention to the subject can be ignorant, that, although during the infancy of his child, he may find it necessary to enforce his commands by menaces of punishment, it is from the affection borne towards him by his child, and not from such menaces, that, properly speaking, he expects the obedience of his child to flow. Threatenings of punishment are employed by him, not for the purpose of superseding, but of promoting, and in subserviency to, the principle of filial affection. Indeed, so clearly is filial affection, and not dread of punishment, the proper and primary principle of obedience, that as the child advances towards maturity, and as the knowledge of the obligations imposed upon him by the relation in which he stands to his parent goes on strengthening, the necessity both for threatening and inflicting punishment, is found proportionally to diminish. Who, that has reflected on all this, perceives not, that, as regards the relation of parent and child, threatenings of punishment, although when viewed in one light a principle of obedience, necessarily imply the previous existence of another and a higher principle? and that the use of such threatenings is not to supersede or contradict, but to aid and quicken the influence of the higher principle, in cases where, from the nature of things, the latter must be comparatively weak and inefficacious? Farther, threatenings of punishment, however far they may extend, can never reach to the destroying of the parental and filial relation: for, besides that the thing is impossible, even if it could be effected, *the* destroying of the relation would be the destroying of

the right to punish,—a right which so decidedly springs from and is so inseparably connected with the relation in question, that it can only be exercised by another in virtue of a real or supposed delegation from the parent. Turning from the case of parent and child to the scriptures, we find the statements just made respecting threatenings and punishments, sanctioned and confirmed by a consideration of God's dealings with the Jewish people. In the third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle reasons from it as a fundamental principle, that God revealed Himself as bearing an unchangeable and indestructible relation to the Jews, and that He gave them promises the fulfilment of which was independent of their own conduct altogether, before He put them under the Mosaic law. *I am the Lord thy God;* that is in other words, "a connection of the closest and most endearing kind subsists between you and me, furnishing you with the most powerful of all motives for affection and obedience towards me;" was God's language to Abraham's descendants, before He issued to them a single command, or enforced His law by a single threatening. Certain consequences of this, according to the same apostle in the eleventh of the Romans, have been, that whatever might be the misconduct of the Jews, it was impossible for God finally to cast them off or destroy them as a nation; and that the unchangeableness of His attachment to them shall yet be manifested, in His bringing them, as a nation, to the enjoyment of privileges and blessings superior to those which their father's possessed. God will have

mercy upon them all. v. 32. Under these circumstances *wherefore served the law?* Gal. iii. 19. For what purpose were commands, accompanied by appropriate threatenings, issued? They were imposed on them as a nation, on the very same principles on which a judicious parent issues commands sanctioned by threatenings to a favourite child. The Jews were then, as regarded the knowledge of the divine character, in a state of infancy; the principle of affection to God as their Father was in them comparatively weak and inefficacious; and it became necessary, therefore, to quicken and enforce its influence, by expedients adapted to their then state and circumstances. *But was the law against* or contradictory to *the promise of God?* v. 21. Were the threatenings, the execution of which was of course *conditional,* intended to interfere with the promise previously given, the fulfilment of which was from its very nature *unconditional?* God having promised *absolutely* and *unconditionally,* that He would in the fullness of time send the Messiah; and *absolutely* and *conditionally,* that He would never make a full end of the nation of the Jews; could He,—by putting the Jews under law, and exposing them to a variety of threatenings,—intend to render the fulfilment of these very promises *conditional,* thereby contradicting Himself? No, says the apostle, *God forbid.* No one part of the divine procedure can contradict another. God had promised to send the Messiah *unconditionally;* and He had promised to preserve the Jews, and bring them as a nation to the enjoyment of New Testament blessings unconditionally; and there-

fore *unconditionally* or *certainly* these events behoved to take place: but the enjoyment of his approbation by the Jews as a nation,—during the period which was to elapse between the issuing of these promises and their fulfilment, or during the period of their national infancy,—was to be *conditional*, or *dependent on their conduct.* He loved them as a Father, and therefore He would not finally cast them off, let their misdeeds be what they might: but he reserved to Himself the rights of a Father, and therefore He intimated to them that He would inflict upon them the severest chastisements, short of casting them off, in the event of their being found to deserve these. All this being understood, how obvious its application to us who believe, who are now by faith *the Israel of God.* God hath promised to us everlasting life *unconditionally;* or He hath revealed Himself as standing to us in *the unchangeable and indestructible relation of our Heavenly Father.* Like the Jews, however, He has put us, while we are upon earth, under law; or has imposed upon us a variety of obligations sanctioned by corresponding penalties: and this, because, while we are upon earth, being at the best in a state of spiritual infancy, we require to have our love to Him, the primary principle of our obedience, quickened and enforced by such expedients. But the laws which He has given us, and the threatenings with which *conditionally* they stand connected, cannot interfere with or contradict the *unconditional* promise. And yet this they would do, were those popular theories of religion correct which suppose,

that God who, in some parts of the scriptures has promised eternal life *unconditionally*, has in other parts of them represented its enjoyment as *conditional*, or *in one way or another depending on our obedience*. Is there a single man capable of putting two ideas together, who does not perceive, that if God could sometimes promise us eternal life *unconditionally* or *certainly*, and sometimes *conditionally* or *uncertainly*, He would contradict Himself? There is evidently no way in which we can steer clear of bringing a charge of self-contradiction against the sacred volume, except by assuming, that those evils, the infliction of which is *conditionally* threatened, cannot include among them the loss of *eternal life*,—the enjoyment of *this blessing* being *unconditionally* promised. Threatenings, therefore, as addressed to believers, must have a reference to their situation, circumstances, and prospects, during *the life that now is*, not to what is to happen to them in *that which is to come*. The moment that this is perceived, every thing becomes plain. God is then seen to threaten us, only after having revealed Himself to us as our Father; and His right to threaten us is seen to spring from the unchangeableness of the relation in which He stands to us as our Father. As the threatenings of a parent, to whatever extent they may reach, never imply the possibility of the child's forfeiting the filial relation;—as God's threatenings of the Jews, notwithstanding their acknowledged severity, never reached to the utter casting off or destruction of them as a nation;—so neither do God's threatenings, addressed to us who believe in

His name, however severe, intimate the possibility of our ceasing to be His sons, or forfeiting everlasting life. Thus it is, that threatenings of punishment, as having a reference to *the life that now is* and not to *eternal life*, constitute *a secondary and subordinate motive to obedience;* leaving love to God as our Heavenly Father, and as *having freely given to us eternal life*, in full operation as *the primary and principal motive.* Unless the purpose to be served by threatenings of punishment were, not to supersede the influence of love or the generous principle, but merely to operate in cases where the higher principle might be out of view and forgotten, or where from circumstances it might be weak and inefficacious,—would not scripture by such threatenings contradict itself? If the object of God be, as I have shewn it is, to overcome the *selfish* by implanting the *generous* principle of obedience,—and if this *generous* principle can only be implanted and maintained by the communication to us of *the certainty of everlasting life*,—threatenings of punishment, which are addressed unquestionably to the *selfishness* of our nature, cannot be intended by God to be *a primary principle of obedience:* for were they so, God would, by one set of means, be strengthening a principle, which by another set of means He was weakening and destroying; or, would be employing means of operating upon the human mind, which neutralized one another: but must be intended by Him to operate upon the minds of believers, only at times and in cases, when and where, from the absence or weakness of superior principles, their minds, except

for such threatenings, would be left without any moral influence at all. The truth is, however, that to speak of threatenings of punishment as *a principle of obedience* in believers, is, in one very important point of view, a misnomer. *A principle of obedience* is something which *stimulates to obedience*,—a quality which threatenings of punishment properly speaking do not possess. The influence of punishment is not *positive* but *negative:* instead of *stimulating to obedience*, its operation is merely to *restrain from disobedience*. See, in illustration of this, Gen. ii. 16, 17, and other passages. The only *stimulating*, and consequently the only *real principle of obedience* is love or affection; and, therefore, threatenings of punishment, *considered as a principle distinct from love*, having it for their object, not to *stimulate* or *urge forward*, but to *rein in, keep back*, and *prevent from deviating into forbidden tracks*, must find a place in some other category than that of *principles of obedience*. In reality, however, *threatenings of punishment* do not constitute *a principle distinct from that of love*, but are merely *one of the modes of expressing it;* and therefore, at the utmost, can only be regarded as *a secondary and subordinate principle of obedience:* it being always recollected, that,—as *every such principle of obedience* implies the existence of *a primary one*, which it cannot contradict, and with which it cannot interfere,—threatenings of punishment addressed to believers cannot by any possibility *refer to the risk of their forfeiting everlasting life;* as if so, they would contradict and interfere with that *certainty*

of everlasting life, which is *the primary principle of their obedience.*

3. The force of the distinction just made, between the *conditional* language of scripture as having a reference to *time*, and its *unconditional* declarations as having a reference to *eternity*, will be still more evident, if it be considered, that it is not so much by the *severity* of the punishments threatened, as by the *certainty* and *promptitude* of their infliction, that human beings are deterred from the commission of evil. This is actually one of the first principles upon which every judicious parent acts in the education of his child. Instead of continually threatening his child with punishments of the most grievous kind, to be inflicted upon him when he shall have arrived at years of maturity, such a parent will take care, that, whatever the punishments threatened may be, they shall *certainly* be carried into effect; and that they shall, as *speedily* as possible, follow the commission of the offence by which they have been merited. This he does, just because observation and experience have taught him, that if punishment is to be had recourse to at all, the *certainty* and *promptitude* of its infliction are what impart to it its chief efficacy. Strange to tell, although the common sense of mankind has, from time immemorial, recognised the correctness of this principle by the almost universal application of it in domestic life, it is but recently that governments have had its application to the treatment of public criminals brought under their notice; and even at the present day, scarcely any of the almost innumerable

sects and parties into which Christendom is divided, have been able to perceive its applicability to the subject of religion. Notwithstanding the writings and labours of a Beccaria, a Howard, a Romilly, and a Roscoe, the criminal codes of many countries are still disfigured by penal enactments so very severe, and so thoroughly disproportioned to the nature and magnitude of the offences committed, that it has been found impossible, consistently with a due regard to public feeling, to carry their provisions into effect; the intention of the legislator being thus defeated; and men, instead of being deterred from crime, having encouragements to it held out to them, by the *uncertainty* of the punishment, and the chances of impunity thereby created:—and notwithstanding the declarations of the inspired writers, and the remonstrances of a few who have been enlightened by their maxims and precepts, threats of hell fire and everlasting torments to be inflicted in a future state of existence, have been denounced so constantly and unsparingly by one religious faction against another, that not merely has the whole doctrine of *future* punishment been brought into suspicion, but a pretty widely extended feeling of indifference with respect to the *present* consequences of irreligion even has been the result. What a striking illustration, this, of the possibility of bending the bow so far as eventually to snap it asunder. In opposition to the very general opinion prevailing among religionists, that the infliction of the punishments threatened by God in His word is *post*poned till a future state,—it requires no very deep or

minute acquaintance with the contents of the scriptures, to discover *their* recognition also of the principle, that a punishment which, although apparently small, is *certainly* and *speedily* inflicted, is more efficacious in restraining from evil, than a punishment even greater in appearance, the infliction of which being postponed till some *future* and *indefinite* period, is thereby to the human mind rendered *uncertain.* The Holy Ghost, speaking by the mouth of Solomon, has, in the strictest conformity with what we know concerning human nature, represented punishment postponed as one fertile source of transgression; declaring, that *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil:** and has besides condescended to furnish us, in the case of the Jews on the one hand, and of Christians on the other, with examples of punishments *postponed,* and of punishments *immediately inflicted,* and of the very different effects of the one and the other. The Jews, as respects religion, previous to Christ's advent were in a state of infancy; Christians, as respects the same subject, are in a state of maturity. Gal. iii. and iv. The principles of obedience to God proposed to the former, were views of the divine character necessarily very limited, combined with punishments chiefly of an external kind; the principles of obedience proposed to the latter, are enlarged views of the divine character, combined with punishments properly speaking internal. Now a moment's reflection may satisfy any one, that the infliction

* Eccl. viii. 11.

of punishments of an *external* kind, such as those undergone by the former, having necessarily been postponed till after the detection of the offence, was, from the chances of escape thereby afforded, attended with more or less of *uncertainty;* and, therefore, could not influence the mind in the same way, that punishments *certainly* and *promptly* to be inflicted would have done. But the case of punishments of an *internal* kind, such as are undergone by every Christian committing evil, is widely different. The violation of conscience in him constituting its own punishment, by means of that uneasiness and sense of the divine disapprobation, which are necessarily and immediately connected with it; and the more enlightened the spiritual mind is, this result being the more painful in the event of evil being indulged in; we have thus, in the *certainty* and the *promptitude* with which, in the spiritually-enlightened mind, punishment attends guilt, the two grand elements in which the true efficacy of punishment has always been found to consist. Let me not be misunderstood, as if I were here contradicting what I have advanced under the immediately preceding head, and pleading for punishment as the grand principle of obedience. No. Not only do I regard punishment as *under all circumstances* and, *at the best,* but *a secondary and subordinate principle of obedience;* but I am satisfied, that in exact proportion as love *the direct and primary principle* is matured and strengthened, in the same proportion will the necessity for having recourse to *the secondary and subordinate principle* be superseded. And yet, if at the

same time that *the primary principle* is strengthened, *the secondary principle* whenever it requires to be had recourse to can be rendered more efficacious likewise, will any one venture to deny that a mind thus circumstanced is subjected to *the strongest conceivable moral influence?* Now this is exactly the case of every mind by which the gospel is believed in. Christianity is superior to Judaism in its *primary and direct principle of obedience;* the knowledge, and therefore the love of God, possessed by the Christian, being superior to the knowledge and love of Him which were possessed by the Jew: and Christianity is superior to Judaism likewise in its *secondary, indirect,* and *restraining principle;* the punishments of the former being *necessarily* and *immediately* connected with guilt, whereas the punishments of the latter were from their very nature *contingent* and *postponed.*—By the way, let me not be understood as excluding entirely from the sanctions of Christianity punishments of an external kind; as it might be shewn, both from scripture and experience, that those feelings of self-disapprobation, which necessarily attend the criminal conduct of the Christian, are an intimation to him, not merely of the divine displeasure, but likewise that his misconduct if persevered in will be punished by severe outward inflictions.—Thus have we, in the *certainty* and *promptitude* with which punishment in their case attends guilt, taken in connection with *the superiority* of their views of the divine character, (the direct principle of their obedience), the reason why Christians *as a body,* (*real* Christians I mean), are superior in character and conduct to what

the Jews *as a nation* either were or could be. And who that understands all this can imagine, that God would propose to Christians the risk of their incurring everlasting torments hereafter, as one of the grand motives of their obedience? As, on the principles just stated and illustrated, it is obvious, that punishments which *certainly* and *immediately* follow evil, although less severe, must always exercise a more commanding influence in deterring from the commission of it, than punishments of a more grievous kind, *the infliction of which is postponed till some future and indefinite period;* why should the Christian, who, we have shewn, *is subjected to the influence of the former,* be supposed to require *to be subjected likewise to the influence of the latter?* If the more efficacious mode of restraint has in the case of Christians actually been had recourse to, in connecting necessarily their transgressions *with present punishment,*—in rendering it impossible for them to enjoy comfort and self-approbation while indulging in the practice of evil,—why tax the Supreme Being with folly, (I say nothing of the injustice of the thing), by representing Him as denouncing against them *future torments;* and as thereby having recourse to a mode of restraining from evil, which the constitution of the human mind, and the experience of six thousand years, have shewn to be completely inefficacious? Why tax the Supreme Being with folly, by representing Him as acting the part of an injudicious parent, who, after spoiling His children, and finding that as a matter of course *His* commands are set at nought and resisted by them,

as a last resort indulges in raving, and storming, and threatening, and all the other results of disappointed impotence? Nay,—laying out of view the proved absurdity of *conditionalizing future happiness,* to the mind of him to whom it has been already manifested *as unconditionally bestowed,*—the superiority of the restraining principle of Christianity, over the restraining principle of Judaism, consisting in this very fact, that the punishments of the former are *present* and *certain,* while those of the latter were *future* and *contingent;* why,—by representing God as threatening Christians, (observe *Christians*), with punishments to be inflicted on them *in a future state of existence,*—represent Him as contradicting and thereby nullifying the very circumstance, in which *the superiority of the restraining principle of the New Testament Dispensation consists?*

The preceding statements being duly considered, it appears, that if the *conditional* language employed in scripture respecting *eternal life,* could have a reference to any thing more than *the enjoyment of the first fruits of it upon earth,* not only would scripture contradict its own oft-repeated declarations, that eternal life is *unconditionally bestowed;* but *it would foster and encourage that principle of selfishness, which it is the object of Christianity to control and subdue;—would vitiate the very nature of threatenings, as at the utmost merely a secondary and subordinate principle of obedience;*—and *would employ future and therefore uncertain punishments to effect that, which,* in the case of Christians, is

already and much better effected by punishments which are immediately and therefore certainly undergone. Strong, however, as all this appears to be, one objection more may be started. "Does not the view which you have presented tend to beget and cherish a feeling of presumption? and does it not thereby hold out an encouragement to sin?" My answer is not merely in the negative, but I have no hesitation in flinging back the charge of fostering presumption, and of thereby encouraging to evil, upon the popular system.

1. The system which I advocate *does not tend to foster presumption.* No reflecting man can deny, that it is presumption in us to expect the enjoyment of benefits, either *without evidence* or *in opposition to evidence.* According to Bereanism, every believer of the truth regarding eternal life as *unconditionally bestowed,* regards it as *necessarily belonging to himself;* and yet regarding the enjoyment of eternal life while he is upon earth as *conditional,* he is satisfied that he shall enjoy it, while here, only in proportion as *the conditions upon which it depends are fulfilled in him.* Now in holding such views is he believing *with* or *without evidence?*—has he or has he not *adequate grounds for his conviction?*—for upon the answer to this depends the fact whether he is presumptuous or not. Let us try. First. *He is absolutely certain that eternal life is bestowed on himself.* That there is no presumption on his part in his entertaining this view, is proved, not merely by the general strain and analogy of scripture, but by such passages as the following: THE GIFT OF GOD is eter-

nal life: or, *eternal life is* THE GIFT OF GOD, *through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. vi. 23. He who believes this, must believe that *eternal life is the gift of God to himself;* unless we suppose him chargeable with the absurdity of holding, that eternal life which, *wherever it is bestowed at all,* is *bestowed unconditionally,* is nevertheless, *in his own particular case, bestowed conditionally.* —THIS IS THE RECORD, *that God hath given* TO US *eternal life; and this life is in his Son.* 1 John v. 11. A man who believes the divine record or testimony, then, must believe that God hath given *to himself personally* eternal life.—Again, the apostle Paul, speaking in his own name and in that of his fellow-believers, declares, *the Spirit itself beareth witness with* OUR SPIRIT, *that* WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD; Rom. viii. 16: and the apostle John asserts, that *he that believeth on the Son of God* HATH THE WITNESS IN HIMSELF. 1 John v. 10. He, therefore, who is possessed of the apostolic faith, having, in the language of the one apostle, *the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit to the fact of his own sonship;* and in the language of the other, *the witness* or *testimony of God in himself;* has nothing short of divine authority for believing himself to be a child of God. So far from the man who is certain that *eternal life is his,* or that *it is the gift of God to himself,* believing *without,* or *in opposition to evidence,* it thus appears that he is believing *according to evidence:* aye, *and the strongest of all evidence, too,* namely, *that of God himself.* How, then, can such a person be presumptuous? Secondly. In holding

that spiritual privileges during his abode upon earth belong to him only *conditionally*, the believer is borne out likewise by a mass of scriptural proofs. *Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Mark xiv. 38. In the event of watchfulness and prayer being neglected, then, believers are liable to fall into temptation. *See, then, that ye walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.* Eph. v. 15, 16. If believers do not comply with this injunction, they have no right to expect the enjoyment of spiritual privileges; and particularly the privilege of being enabled to *adorn their profession, by a walk and conversation becoming the gospel:* such privileges never standing connected except with the exercise of much caution, prudence, and circumspection.—*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* Philip. ii. 12. The risk of believers falling into sin, and thereby incurring the divine displeasure, is so great, as to justify and demand the utmost vigilance, and the most godly jealousy on their part. Besides, they enjoy a present salvation or deliverance from evil, only, in so far as carnal propensities are overcome *by them*, or rather *in them.**—*Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* 1 Cor. x. 12. So true is it that *pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*, that never are believers more liable to fall into transgression, and expose

* *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Phil. ii. 13. Our consciousness, then, of a disposition to withstand evil is *of itself* a proof that God is prompting us, and an encouragement to proceed; nay, it is, properly speaking, the very means by which evil is overcome.

themselves to the chastisements of their Heavenly Father, than when, in the pride and ignorance of their hearts, they are supposing themselves least liable to do so.—*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* 1 Corinth. ix. 27. The apostle Paul, whose language this is, perceived, that great and valuable as his privileges were, he could expect to retain them, only in the event of his acting according to the dictates of his peculiarly enlightened conscience. See verse 23d. In preceeding ages of the church, many castaways, or rejected ones,* had appeared among believers of the truth; in all of whom the rejection had stood connected with violation of principle: and the apostle, taught by their case, saw that, with his own perseverance in the path chalked out to him by divine authority, and fulfilment of the obligations imposed on him as an apostle and follower of the Lamb, stood inseparably connected the testimony of his own conscience,—the approbation of his Heavenly Father,—and his continuance in the apostolical office: or, that upon his acting a part different from that of *castavays* depended *his not sharing their fate.* The prize, then, at which Paul aimed, and which was to be *conditionally* enjoyed by him, was not *eternal life,*—for that he knew *was secured to him,* and the certainty of enjoying it he felt to be the spring of all his actions,—but was *the enjoyment of religious privileges by him on*

* ἀδόκιμοι.

*his journey heavenwards.**—But, besides all this, the flagrant transgressions with which believers both in old and new Testament times have been chargeable; and the bitter remorse of conscience, as well as the awful temporal judgments, with which such transgressions have been visited; are so many warnings to us of our own liability to go astray, and of the dreadful consequences which will inevitably follow in the event of our doing so. In believing, then, that while we are upon earth we can only enjoy spiritual blessings *conditionally;* and that as we are men of like passions with those who have preceded us in the Christian race, *we can only be preserved from the evils into which many of them fell by the utmost vigilance and circumspection;* instead of being *presumptuous,* or believing *in opposition to evidence,* are we not believing exactly *according to evidence?*—But not content with warding off the charge of presumption from Bereanism, I bring that very charge against the popular systems of religion, and their adherents. And I prove it, first, by the fact, that popular religionists, not perceiving eternal life to be *bestowed on themselves,*—which, if they believed the divine testimony concerning that blessing as *unconditionally bestowed,* they would do,—necessarily regard their acquisition of it as *conditional:* or depend for the attainment of it upon *the performance or possession of some qualification or qualifications by themselves.* But if it be *presumption* to believe *without* or *in opposition*

* He had also another *temporal* or rather *conditional* reward in view, which will be understood by referring to 1 Thessal. ii. 19, 20.

to evidence; and if the oft-repeated declarations of scripture be, that eternal life is *the gift of God,* and *as such* must be *unconditionally enjoyed;* what epithet so suitable, as that of *presumption,* to apply to the conduct of him, who perseveres in expecting to receive a blessing *conditionally,* which he has been informed, upon authority which he professes to revere, can only be received *unconditionally?* This, however, is not all, for, secondly, the adherents of popular systems, are by the very necessity of the case *presumptuous* in their hopes of undergoing such a change or improvement during their abode upon earth, as shall warrant them in entertaining, *at some future period,* a greater certainty respecting eternal life than *at present* they are conscious of doing. This is *presumption,* because, in the first place, it proceeds on the principle of confidence towards God being in some measure derivable *from self,* in opposition to the divine testimony which represents it as derived solely and exclusively *from what God has declared Himself to be:* a fact which shews us, that if *at any future period* peace is to be spoken to any individual's conscience, and the certainty of everlasting life is to be imparted to him, it will be merely through the medium of *the very same truth* which, if understood, would speak peace, and impart certainty to him, *at the present moment.* And it is *presumption,* likewise, because, in the second place, it implies the expectation on his part that he shall undergo a change and improvement *at some future period of his life,* which the word of God has declared *never* can take place. If there is

one thing more frequently inculcated in the sacred volume than another, it is the utter impossibility of any mere human being *living without sin. What man is he that liveth and sinneth not?* When the apostle Paul represents himself as having discoved that *in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwelt no good thing;*—that *the good which he would, he did not, and the evil which he would not, that he did;*—and that *when he would do good, evil was present with him:*—and when the apostle John, speaking in the name of the whole church of God, declares, that *if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:*—they have given us to understand, how great must be the presumption of that man, who expects during his abode in the flesh, I do not say, to attain *to perfect purity and sinlessness of character,* but even to discover in himself *any improvement whatever in the tendencies and propensities of human nature.** With this presumption, however, every supporter of popular systems of religion is necessarily chargeable. Not knowing himself, *as one with Christ,* to be *personally interested in that spotless righteousness of his, which, whenever understood, speaks perfect, unchangeable, and everlasting peace to the conscience,* such a person is necessarily thrown for peace upon *his own resources,*—upon *such fancied discoveries of excellence in himself as he is capable of making.* But as, however desirable peace of conscience is, no *present* attainments

* The effect of the apostle Paul's peculiar illumination we perceive was, that so far from discovering in himself more good than formerly, he actually discovered in himself no good thing at all.

of any human being can *of themselves* furnish him with *the absolute certainty of everlasting life*,—the only true source of *such peace*,—he who has nothing but his own attainments to look to is constrained to hope, that *at some future period* he may discover in himself, what *at the present moment* he is conscious is not there. And what does he hope for? Why, certainly, to find himself *at some future period* less sinful, less inclined to evil, than *now*; for, if *in future* he expected to be no better than he is *now*, he might as well cherish the hope of everlasting life *now* as *then*. But what right has he to expect, that human nature in him may *at some future period* be better than it *now* is? None whatever: the express doctrine of the inspired volume being, that human nature, so far from being susceptible of any improvement,—of any change for the better,—is *rootedly* and *unchangeably evil*: that *it is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God*, NEITHER INDEED CAN BE. Rom. viii. 7. To which we may add, further, that, according to the same infallible authority, *human nature*, instead of being *improved in the Christian*, is in him *exactly the same as in any other man*: the Christian, as possessed of *the principle of faith*, having in him, not *human nature improved*, but *the first fruits of the divine nature*; under the influence of which the tendencies of human nature are now *restrained, controlled*, and *crucified*; and by which human nature itself shall finally *be swallowed up and destroyed*. One piece of presumption, then, exhibited by popular religionists of all descriptions, consists in this, that, having no ground

of hope but *in themselves;* and *self,* as a ground of hope, always requiring *to be more perfect* than it is *at any given moment;* they are actually compelled to expect, *at some future period, the improvement in them of a nature* which is totally *unsusceptible of improvement:* and which, as *unable to help sinning continually,* God has declared it *to be His intention ultimately to destroy.* Now, can any man, who has perused with attention the preceding statements, be unprepared to say, to whom the charge of presumption properly attaches? To him who, because God has promised everlasting life *unconditionally,* and yet has declared that the enjoyment of the first fruits of it upon earth is *conditional,* is, on the one hand, *absolutely certain of everlasting life;* and, on the other hand, *uncertain respecting his enjoyment of it here:* or to him who ventures to call God a liar, both *by expecting eternal life conditionally and therefore uncertainly;* and also *by anticipating an improvement in the tendencies of human nature, and the acquisition of a sinlessness of natural character, which God has declared cannot by any possibility take place?**

* It may not be amiss here to advert to Peter's denial of Christ, as a circumstance which is deemed to be conclusive in their favour, by those who dislike and object to Mr. Barclay's doctrine of *the assurance of faith.* "Peter," say they, "in the confidence which he professed, was guilty of gross presumption; and the result should be a warning to all who have adopted the Berean sentiments." The premises are admitted; the conclusion is denied. It is unquestionably true, that Peter, in the confidence which he expressed, was *presumptuous;* for he ventured to cherish hopes, not only *without evidence,* but *in opposition to evidence.* He who is *the faithful and the true witness* had said, *all ye shall be offended because of me this night.* Mat. xxvi. 31. No, said Peter, *though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* v. 33. Here was presump-

2. A view of eternal life as *unconditionally bestowed,* and of the enjoyment of it upon earth as *conditional,* or the Berean theory, holds out no encouragement to evil. In proof of this, I might have contented myself with again insisting on the fact of gratitude springing from a sense of the magnitude and freeness of divine grace, naturally and necessarily *constraining* those in whom it dwells to love and obey God; and on the superior efficacy of *present* and *inevitable,* over *future* and *contingent* punishments, in *restraining* from transgression. But at present, in order to avoid repetition, I waive any advantage to be derived from this; and rest the weight

tion, with a vengeance; the lie direct was given to the Lord of Glory; and the fate of Peter is most properly placed upon record, as a warning to all who venture to cherish hopes which *God's word has not warranted.* But what, in the name of common sense, has all this to do with the case of men, who, *with the divine testimony for their warrant,* believe with absolute certainty that *God hath given to them eternal life, and that this life is in his Son?* 1 John v. 11. The presumption of Peter had a reference, not to *eternal life,* but to circumstances which were to occur during *this present life;* to circumstances, therefore, where, independently of an express divine revelation, no man could have had absolute certainty as to how he should act; and to circumstances in which, as soon as a divine testimony that he in common with others should act incorrectly had been given, it became the height of daring presumption in him to contradict that testimony. And, so understood, the case of Peter will be found to afford a most valuable and appropriate lesson to worldly and popular religionists; who, in spite of, and in opposition to, the reiterated declarations of scripture respecting *the thorough and unchangeable enmity of human nature both to God and to his law,* are nevertheless presumptuously flattering themselves that *human nature in them has been or may be changed and improved;* and, who, being thereby filled with pride and self-conceit, are *necessarily thrown off their guard,* and *prevented from exercising that strict and wholesome vigilance over themselves, which a conviction of the unchangeable proneness of human nature to evil, is in every child of God found to inspire.* This subject is admirably treated by Mr. Sang, of Kirkaldy, in his "Observations on some passages which occur in the writings of Mr. Walker of Dublin."

of my argument on the following position. Knowledge, according to Lord Bacon, is power. Whatever may be in this as a general principle, one thing is obvious and undeniable, that a person who is acquainted with the habits of thinking, propensities, and operations of his own mind; or, in other words, a person who is possessed of that most desirable of all accomplishments, self-knowledge; is more likely to have his mind under control, than one who is destitute of it. This being admitted, it may be observed farther, as a sort of corollary, that whatever tends to promote *self-knowledge*, must, by enlarging the means and strengthening the habits of *self-control*, be opposed to evil; just as, on the other hand, whatever tends to blind the mind, or to retain it in a state of ignorance respecting *itself*, leaves its tendencies to evil, whether natural or acquired, *unchecked and uncontrolled*. Now I have no hesitation in maintaining, that the doctrine of eternal life being in the strictest sense of the terms *the gift of God*, has a necessary tendency when understood *to promote self-knowledge*. This it has, first, from the circumstance of our being unable to apprehend *the freeness of eternal life*, except in connection with our apprehending *the character of Christ as its source, author, and medium*. Jesus as the Messiah is *the everlasting Father;** Isaiah

* I am not ignorant of Bishop Lowth's translation of this passage, viz., *the Father of the everlasting age;* nor am I disposed to quarrel with it: but the Hebrew words admit of the present rendering; and that so rendered they offer a very excellent and scriptural meaning,—Jesus as our *Everlasting Father*, or *the source to us of everlasting life*, standing contrasted with Adam as our *temporal father*, or *the source to us of temporal life*,—no one acquainted with the subject can deny.

ix. 6, 1 Corinth. xv. 44—49: and *eternal life* is the gift of God *in* or *through him;* Rom. vi. 23, 1 John v. 11. But to apprehend Christ is of course to apprehend him as what he is; that is, as *a perfect character:* and as *perfect* he stands contrasted with mere human beings who are *imperfect.* To apprehend his *superiority,* is then necessarily, at the same time and by the same means, to apprehend our own *inferiority:* or, in proportion as his character stands out to our view, in the same proportion does it *as light* make us acquainted with our own, which is in every respect contrasted with and inferior to it. What is all this, however, but to have *self-knowledge* promoted in us? And as *self-knowledge,* it has been shewn, implies the power of *self-control;* how clearly is *the certainty of everlasting life,* as implying *the knowledge of Christ,* seen to produce and promote both? But, secondly, *self-knowledge,* and therefore *self-control,* is promoted by the belief that *eternal life is the gift of God* in another way. The belief in question, wherever it really exists, necessarily involving in it *the certainty that eternal life is our own personal privilege,*—our state, circumstances, and conduct *here,* cease to produce in our minds any anxiety with respect to our destiny *hereafter.* As eternal life, by *being absolutely and infallibly secured to us,* is now seen by us *to depend in no respect whatever upon our own doings;* and as it is therefore of no consequence to us though *we should discover ourselves to be altogether unworthy of it;* we can now bear to look into our own minds: and are prepared, without anxiety or alarm, to view matters as

they really are. We can now look at the case steadily, under the worst aspect which it can by any possibility assume. Though we should now, as the result of our investigations, discover, that *the carnal mind*, or human nature in us, *is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;* and *that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing;* having *the certainty of eternal life*, what is there in all this to terrify us? Knowing that eternal life belongs to us, not as the reward of our obedience, but in consequence of its being gratuitously conferred on us by our Heavenly Father, we know, that let the worst come to the worst; that let us discover ourselves to be still viler than at the present moment we suppose ourselves to be;—so vile, indeed, as to be destitute of a single quality upon which God can look with approbation;—we can merely be furnished, thereby, with additional evidence, that we necessarily partake of eternal life on the footing of mercy. And does not the certainty, that we have thus nothing to dread from any discoveries which we may make in ourselves, remove one of the strongest dissuasives from cultivating that most important of all sciences, *self-knowledge?* Nay, by withdrawing entirely every inducement to decline engaging in the task of self-examination; or, if it be engaged in, every disposition to form a false estimate of our state and character in the sight of God, and thereby to impose on ourselves,—a disposition which must ever exist, and must ever operate, in cases where *future prospects* are in any respect whatever conceived to depend on

present attainments ;—does not this certainty render the acquisition of the science in question easy and practicable? But as the promotion of *self-knowledge* is the strengthening of the principle of *self-control*, must not *this certainty*, by promoting *self-knowledge*, tend to *check and restrain in us our natural propensities to evil?*— When we reverse the picture and enquire, what must be the result of men *not perceiving eternal life certainly to belong to them ;* or, in other words, *not perceiving it to be the gift of God?* we are obliged to answer, that it must be *a tendency to evil :* not only, because their minds are necessarily uninfluenced by the divine principle of *love to God as having first loved them*, but because there is an insuperable barrier thereby thrown in the way of their acquiring *self-knowledge. Uncertainty respecting eternal life* is inconsistent with *self-knowledge*, in the first place, because it implies *ignorance of the character of Christ Jesus.* As it is a property of *light* and not of *darkness* to make manifest, it is only by means of and in proportion to the understanding by us of Christ's perfect character, which is *light*, that the imperfection of our own characters can be known by us. Whatever, then, tends to hinder our becoming acquainted with *the character of Christ*, tends to hinder our becoming acquainted with *our own ;* and as there is in every man who is *uncertain respecting life everlasting*, ignorance of the character of Christ as *certainly bestowing that blessing*, there is in such a person, therefore, a want of the only medium through which he can become acquainted with *himself.* But to be destitute of *self-*

knowledge is, as we have seen, to be destitute of the principle of *self-control.* The man, then, who fancies that eternal life is in any respect whatever *conditionally* and therefore *uncertainly* bestowed, being destitute of *that knowledge of Christ* which alone and necessarily brings along with it *self-knowledge* and *self-control,* is destitute of one very strong principle of *restraint from evil.* But, in the second place, *uncertainty with regard to our own personal interest in everlasting life,* is an obstruction to *self-knowledge* and *self-control,* in the following way. If the attention of any man ignorant of Christ be directed inwardly; or, if self-examination be engaged in by him; it is for the purpose of seeing himself *as he would wish to be,* not for that of seeing himself *as he really is.* The man who is not satisfied that eternal life *certainly* belongs to him, labouring under the impression that it is in some way or other *dependent on himself,* necessarily proceeds to the work of self-examination *with a bias on his mind.* He necessarily feels solicitous to discover in himself something upon which he may rely as *a ground of hope towards God.* To see himself *altogether vile,* and that too *without the possibility of being otherwise,* would be to blast his hopes completely, and reduce him to absolute despair; and, therefore, when he does look into himself, it is with the lurking, although, perhaps, unavowed desire and expectation, that he may there find out something calculated to support his mind in the prospect of eternity. Now can a man whose mind is thus necessarily biassed in his own favour,—a man whose peace of mind is

absolutely dependent on his procuring from himself a favourable verdict in his own case,—be qualified to judge impartially? Supposing it to be true, that *in him, that is, in his flesh, there is,* as the scripture has informed us, *no good thing,*—is he, with every inducement to find out there *the existence of some good thing,* likely to take a view of matters in himself *as they really are?* Is he, common sense itself being judge, under such circumstances, likely, I do not say to *grow in self-knowledge,* but even *to acquire any measure of self-knowledge at all?* Why, a very little reflection may satisfy us, that,—as in order to such a person's having any hope whatever, he must fancy, that *he has discovered in himself, what scripture repeatedly tells him he can never in fact discover there,*—if, while ignorant of Christ, and uncertain respecting eternal life, he looks into himself, *self-delusion* must be the very element in which *he lives, and moves, and has his being.* The man who knows that eternal life is *certainly and indefeasibly his* can, as has been already shewn, bear to look at himself as, what he is, *altogether vile and unworthy,* without dread or dismay; and therefore has no motive,—no inducement,—to decline scrutinizing his own character to the very utmost: but the man who *does not know for certain* that eternal life is his, being not only *ignorant of Christ,*—the only true source of *self-knowledge,*—but actually obliged, in order to his enjoying any peace of mind at all, to find in himself virtues and good qualities *which human nature does not possess,* is, in every thing that wears the semblance of self-examination,

merely practising upon himself *the grossest self-delusion.* Now, is not the man who is thus necessarily ignorant of self,—nay, who is thus necessarily deluding himself,—destitute of the very principle from which *self-control,* and therefore *opposition to evil,* can proceed? and is not the person thus circumstanced *in the fittest state imaginable for falling into transgression?**

Before dismissing Mr. Barclay's theory, I may state, that I have reserved till the last an argument in its

* If the two last paragraphs be duly considered, they will be found to afford an explanation of the gross immoralities into which many high and flaming professors of religion are continually falling. The views of such persons being inconsistent with *self-knowledge,* are calculated to foster in them a spirit of *pride, self-deceit,* and *presumption;* and these qualities, by an easy transition, *lead almost necessarily to crime.* Sadducees, under which term I include a large majority of mankind, being in a great measure if not entirely regardless of religious principle, frequently lay down for themselves so correct a code of worldly morality, and have so clear a conception of the temporal disadvantages which would result from any gross violation of it, as to be able to pass through life with tolerable credit to themselves. But Pharisees, or devotees in general, whether Socinian, Arminian, or Calvinistic, whether methodistical or anti-methodistical, having it for their great aim to recommend themselves to the notice and approbation of their fellow-men, no less than to the favour of God, *by their superior religious attainments,* find their comfort and peace of mind necessarily dependent on *their fancying themselves to have made such attainments.* Now, the existence of good in *self,* being contrary to *fact,* which shews us, that human nature is *altogether vile;* and to *scripture,* which,—after revealing to us, that of mere human beings, there is *none good, no not one,*—reveals to us all goodness *treasured up and alone discoverable in Christ,* 1 Cor. i. 30, 31; the discovery of good in *self* must not only be *imaginary,* or *the mere effect of self-delusion,* but must have a tendency likewise *to puff up and inflate the mind.* But how, constituted as human nature is, can a man *be thinking highly of himself,* and at the same time be *on his guard against himself?* How can he be fancying that in him there dwell *many good things;* or, that his natural dispositions and propensities, however vicious formerly, *have now undergone a change for the better;* and at the same time be

favour, in my apprehension so strong and cogent, as to deserve a very particular consideration. It is commonly

exercising a constant, vigilant, and wholesome control over these dispositions and propensities, *as only, and thoroughly, and necessarily opposed to God?* Rom. viii. 7. The thing is impossible. Hence it is, that I am always alarmed for those who, in common parlance, are denominated *high professors.* Pride springing from the fancied possession of personal excellence, is the very essence of their religion; and the issue cannot be doubtful. Knowing, as I do, and that, too, upon the highest of all authority, that *pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall;* when I observe such men elated,—and turning up their noses at others,—and abounding in the language of cant,—and expecting by their truckling subserviences to make the religion of Christ and themselves *respectable* in the eyes of the world,—and throwing over the internal workings of pride and self-conceit, the external garb of mock humility,—I am afraid lest, from the spirit of self-delusion under which I know them to be labouring, I should sooner or later hear of their *having been overtaken in* some grievous *fault.* They *know not themselves:* while *uncertain respecting eternal life,* that is, while *ignorant of the gospel,* they neither have nor can have *the only principle from which self-knowledge is derivable:* and if so, can we wonder at their being the prey of *the most awful delusions,*—at their indulging in *the greatest crimes?* O! how practically useful and important is it for those who are Christians indeed, continually to bear in mind, that, if abandoned to themselves, there is no crime, however atrocious, of which they may not be guilty! That human nature is in them *now,* the same as it was *formerly,* and the same that it is *in others;* and that numerous instances of misconduct on the part of the saints in past ages have been put upon record, not certainly as encouragements to imitate their example, but as so many beacons and warnings; the language of which obviously is: "having the same nature in you which they had, and being exposed to the same temptations which they were, be on your guard;" or, as scripture itself beautifully and emphatically expresses it, *be not high-minded, but fear:* and, *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!* It is in this very consciousness,—this deep-settled, rooted, and permanent conviction,—of the unchangedness and unchangeableness of human nature in him; and therefore of his own inability of himself to resist temptations, where sufficiently strong, and properly adapted to his particular age, temperament, disposition, and other circumstances; that the real spiritual strength of the Christian consists: for it is the source of his realizing in his own experience the truth of the apostolic declaration, that *God's strength is perfected in our weakness:* and it compels him to betake himself continually to his Heavenly Father with the prayer, *uphold thou my goings, and I shall be safe.* But how can any one learn and act on the numerous practical lessons of man's constant and invet-

imagined, that *some degree of dread* respecting the personal possession of eternal life; or, that a view of eternal life as *in part at least* conditionally bestowed; is indispensably requisite as *a preventative from evil.* That *perfect confidence* is inconsistent with *perfect obedience.* This, as is well known by those who have studied these systems, is the fundamental principle of Sandemanianism, and semi-Sandemanianism: and it is upon this principle that the sapient editor of the Christian Herald, —after allowing, in the critique so often already referred to, that the apostle Paul does sometimes use the language of *confidence* respecting his own ultimate enjoyment of eternal life,—represents him as taking care to qualify it, by using the language of *doubt* respecting

erate tendency to evil taught us in the scriptures, except a Christian? If I do not know *for certain* that I have eternal life, as my *uncertainty* respecting the subject must stand connected with *ignorance of* and *unbelief in* the perfection of Christ's work, I must be deriving my hopes of future happiness, such as they are, from my own works;—from some moral or spiritual excellence which I suppose that I have discovered in myself:—but as in human nature there is in reality nothing excellent, and nothing consequently upon which the hope of eternal life can with propriety be founded;—a circumstance which shews that, in fancying I have discovered excellence in myself, I must be labouring under the influence of self-delusion;—and as self-delusion inflates the mind, and, thereby necessarily throwing it off its guard, lays it open undefended to the assaults of temptation; is it not plain, that *the very necessity of the mind deriving its hopes of future happiness from itself,*— into which, *uncertain as to the final possession of everlasting life* and yet *anxious about the subject,* it is thrown,—leads more or less to *the commission of evil.*

I may here add, that were it not for my reluctance unduly to lengthen the work, and my conviction that the object aimed at by me has been sufficiently accomplished already, I might have proved further, that in certain constitutions of mind, and under certain circumstances, the popular doctrines, by resting the hopes of the individual in one way or another upon himself, lead to *despair;* and that *despair* likewise is a fruitful parent of crime.

the same subject. Now, what is a principle of good *in one*, must be a principle of good *in all*. If the view just adverted to, be applicable to the members of the Christian church, it must be applicable likewise to their Head. *If some degree of uncertainty* respecting eternal life, must enter as a component part and constituent element into *the principle of obedience;* and if without it *the principle of obedience* be defective; it must of course, then, have entered into and constituted a part of *the principle of obedience of our blessed Lord.* But was this in reality the case? Can a single passage, in the narratives of the evangelists, or in the numerous allusions to Christ's history in the Acts of the Apostles and their epistles, be pointed out, in which the Saviour is represented as speaking *doubtingly, hesitatingly,* or *uncertainly,* with respect to the relation in which he stood to his Heavenly Father, and his enjoyment of everlasting life? Not one. On the contrary, his speeches and conduct are distinguished by nothing more, than by *the spirit of perfect confidence in God* which they breathe and exhibit. Perhaps, if they durst, some of our popular clergy would call it *the spirit of presumption.* But, let men ignorant of what *the spirit of faith* is, and therefore destitute of the possession of it, give what nicknames to it they please, at the head of the family of believers stands the great *author and finisher of faith* himself: not *wavering, sceptical,* and *uncertain,* as most of our modern professors are; but like all who have preceded him in the heavenly path, although in a still higher degree, *firm* and *unshaken* in

the belief of what God has declared: and therefore *for the joy that was set before him,* that is, under the influence of a spirit of *perfect confidence* that he should ultimately be put in possession of the glory promised him, and not under the influence of any kind or degree of dread, *enduring the cross, despising the shame.* Heb. xii. 1, 2. How strikingly and beautifully is the spirit of the Messiah, (as a spirit of *perfect confidence*), exhibited in the manner in which he overcame the temptations of Satan: not falling into the snares laid for him, by being induced to attempt to rest his conviction of being the Son of God *upon something else than the divine testimony,* (a disposition to do which constitutes the very essence of the popular delusions), but resting with perfect and unchangeable confidence *upon the divine declaration that he was so,* as the *best* and *highest,* nay, as the *only* proof of the fact which he could have; and thereby *quenching* triumphantly *all the fiery darts of the wicked one.* Matthew iv. 1—11.* How strikingly and beautifully is the same spirit of perfect confidence exhibited in the manner in which he wrought his miracles; *I will, be thou clean:*—in the attributes which he assumed; *before Abraham was, I am: I and my Father are one*:—in the rebukes which he administered; *ye say that my Father is your God; yet ye have not known him; but I know him; and if I should say I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him and keep his saying:*—and in the language employed by him in his expiring agonies;

* See appendix G.

MY GOD, MY GOD, *why hast thou forsaken me:* and, FATHER, *into thy hands I commend my spirit.* Nor does this confidence of Jesus, in so far as it could be exhibited in language and manners, seem to have escaped the observation of the multitude, as a something which distinguished him from their false teachers: for it is mentioned, that when, at the close of his remarkable sermon, he came down from the mount, *the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* Now there is but one conclusion, and that an exceedingly obvious one, which I can deduce from the preceding facts and statements. It being clear, that there was in the Lord Jesus *the most perfect confidence* respecting his Messiahship, and enjoyment of eternal life; *I and my Father are one:—for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame:*—and it being clear, likewise, that *this perfect confidence* in him did not in the slightest degree interfere with, but rather implied the existence of, the most perfect humility; *he was meek and lowly in heart:* and the most perfect devotedness to the service of his Heavenly Father; *it was his meat to do the will of Him that sent him, and to finish his work:*—how evident, that *a certain degree of uncertainty* respecting eternal life is not *indispensable* as an element in *the principle of obedience;* and that *absolute confidence in God,* and *the absolute certainty of eternal life,* are not *necessarily productive of presumption and evil.* Nay, may I not rather draw my conclusion *positively,* and say; from the experience of Christ,

we learn, that *confidence in God as our Heavenly Father*, so far from being *a principle of evil*, is *necessarily productive of humility and goodness*. Besides, are we not expressly told, that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?* But the Spirit of Christ was, as we have just seen, *a spirit of perfect confidence in God as his Heavenly Father:* and if so, can any man be possessed of Christ's Spirit, *who is labouring under doubts and fears, as to the relationship in which he himself stands to God?* Can any man be possessed of Christ's Spirit, *who is destitute of that in which the very essence of this Spirit consists?* As sinful, which the Messiah himself was not, we may properly and consistently enough entertain fears of incurring the displeasure of God as our Heavenly Father *in time;* fears from which the mind of him who *was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*, must of course have been altogether exempt: but, as knowing that, in spite of the *sinfulness* of our present natures, we are one with the *sinless* Messiah; and that, as one with him, everlasting life is secured to us through him;—that privilege being conferred on us *unconditionally*, and therefore *independently of all merits or demerits of our own;*—what possibility is there of our entertaining fears with respect to *eternity?*

The views presented in the latter part of this chapter may be thus summed up. Belief in eternal life as *the gift of God*, or as *unconditionally bestowed*, which is belief in it as *bestowed on ourselves personally*, consti-

tutes *the primary and direct principle of Christian obedience.* Until we apprehend God's character as LOVE,—which we can only do in the light of and in connection with *the love which we perceive Him to cherish towards ourselves,*—there are in our minds only *natural, earthly, and selfish motives of obedience.* We never *love God,* or become possessed of *a spiritual, heavenly, and generous principle,* until we know that *God hath first loved us.* 1 John iv. 19. This new and heavenly principle, it is, which *constrains us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto God.* 2 Corinth. v. 14, 15. But as, during our abode in this present world, *we are sinful creatures,* and *continually beset with temptations;* in addition to *love of God,* as *the primary or direct,* we require *a secondary or indirect principle of obedience.* Love to God as *our Heavenly Father,*—as *our certain and everlasting portion,*—*stimulates or constrains us to obedience;* but it is requisite that, while passing through this world, we should also be furnished with a principle which shall *check us* and *restrain us from disobedience.* Such are all those threatenings with which the sacred volume abounds. As, however, there can be nothing inconsistent or self-contradictory in the divine arrangements, the two principles cannot interfere with or contradict one another:—in other words, the *restraining principle* cannot be the rendering of that *conditional,* the *unconditionality* of which constitutes the very essence of the *constraining principle.* God who has declared, in language the most clear and explicit, that He bestows eternal life *unconditionally,* can never, with a view to

the accomplishment of any object whatever, contradict Himself by declaring that He bestows it *conditionally*. How thoroughly is *even the appearance* of self-contradiction obviated when we understand the fact, that although God has presented to our minds *eternal life as unconditionally bestowed*, for the purpose of this view becoming in us *the direct and stimulating motive of our obedience*, He has, by rendering the enjoyment of the first fruits of eternal life upon earth *conditional*, imposed *a most salutary and efficacious check upon the corrupt propensities of human nature*. With what ease, now, can we explain the language of the apostle respecting the possibility of his becoming a *castaway*, 1 Cor. ix. 27; consistently with his language elsewhere: *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*. 2 Tim. i. 12. How evident, that although believers are *absolutely certain* of their being *even now the Sons of God*, 1 John iii. 1, 2, their hearts may nevertheless from time to time *condemn them* as *transgressors of the divine commandments;* verses 21, 22. Nay, how evident, that it is only in proportion as *we are denying ungodliness and worldly lusts;* or, in proportion as *faith is exerting in us its victorious energy;* that we can be *tasting by anticipation the joys and pleasures of the heavenly state*. Delightful and consolatory is it for us who believe to know, that God's treatment of us is decidedly, in all respects, parental; that, while we are in this present world, and from our state of spiritual infancy liable continually to go astray,

He surrounds us with "nursery walls,"—fences us in with threatenings of chastisement, having it for their object to restrain us from evil,—and visits upon us the chastisements threatened, as long and as far as he perceives the doing so to be necessary: but that His object in threatening and chastising us being *our good*, and not *our destruction*, He never, by threatenings of punishment to be inflicted upon us throughout eternity, —punishments which, if threatened and incurred, would require to be inflicted,—lays aside the character of the affectionate but judicious parent, to assume that of the stern and vindictive despot.*

That I may take away, as far as in me lies, all cause of misrepresentation or mistake with respect to the views propounded and advocated in this chapter, I beg leave to submit them to my readers, condensed in the three following propositions.

PROP. I. Eternal life although, properly speaking, always conferred and enjoyed *unconditionally*, may nevertheless, in popular phraseology, be said to be enjoyed by some of the human race while on earth *conditionally*.

PROP. II. The *condition* on which any of the human race enjoy eternal life upon earth, is their *believing*,

* Much important information respecting the nature and motives of Christian obedience will be found in Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. There are many valuable remarks on the same subject in a little work written by my friend Mr. R. G. Hunt, entitled, "Letters on the Evidences of Faith, and the impregnable security of believers in Christ."

agreeably to the divine record, that *it is unconditionally bestowed;* Rom. vi. 23: and, consequently, that, as to its first fruits, *it is even already bestowed on themselves.* 1 John v. 11.

PROP. III. As *faith,* or *belief in the divine testimony,* is necessarily connected with and works by *love;* Rom. v. 1—5; Gal. v. 6, 22; Eph. v. 2; Coloss. i. 4, 5; 1 Tim. i. 5; 1 John iv. 11, 20, 21: and as *love* is necessarily inconsistent with and overcomes *evil;* Matt. xxii. 37—40; John xv. 8—10; Rom. xiii. 8—10: therefore, the measure or degree in which *the first fruits of eternal life are now possessed by and realized in any of the children of men,* is the measure or degree in which *the principle of evil is overcome in them;* or, in which *they are observant of the divine commandments.* 1 Cor. ix. 16—27; 2 Peter i. 5—11.*

* See appendix H.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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ERRATA IN VOLUME 2.

Page 21, line 2d from bottom, after *connected*, read *alike*.—47, line 4th from top, after *we*, dele *can*.—92, line 10th from top, for *antidiluvian*, read *antediluvian*.—105, line 2d from top, before *yet*, insert *that*; and line 3d, after *moment*, dele *that*; and before *came*, insert *he*.—111, line 9th from bottom, for *negatively*, read *positively*; and line 6th from bottom, for *positively*, read *negatively*.—144, in first line of note after *Act*. insert *Syn*. as contraction for *Synodi*.—168, last line, for *quo*, read *qua*.—169, line 11th from top, for *continu*, read *contrive*.—174, line 8th from top, after *life*, for *the period*, put *mark of interrogation*.—192, line 5th from bottom, for *continue*, read *contrive*.—206, 3d line of note, for *on*, read *in*.—239, 2d line from top, for *exceed*, read *excite*.—249, line 3d from bottom, for *hope*, read *trust*.—288, line 9th from bottom, after *long after*, dele *he and*.—292, line 2d from top, after *certain ideas*, for *of*, read *or*.—294, line 4th, for *sprang*, read *sprung*.—313, line 5th of text from bottom, for *etemology*, read *etymology*.—330, after quotation, read *Emile, tome 2de, pages 261, 262, Paris* 1813.—336, line 6th from bottom, for *their*, read *his*.—377, line 8th from bottom, for *one of*, read *of one*.—425, line 13th from top, after *giving away*, read *freely*; and line 14th, after *afford*, read *thus*.—421, end of 6th line from bottom of note, after *upon*, read *His*.








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